

## The Deputy Governors In Imam 'Ali's Government

Through its political legislations and administrative rules, Islam has paid very much attention to the development of the country in such fields like agriculture and industry, the protection of the citizens from disease and poverty, the equality of job opportunities, and the procuring of all necessities of life.

Of course, the establishment of a society that is balanced in behavior, security, and luxury depends mainly on the machinery of government, because the ruling authorities are responsible for creating the activities that contribute to the advancement of the country and the flourishing of life therein.

In the view of Islam, the responsibilities of the government must not be restricted to a certain aspect of the citizens' lives; rather, it must include all aspects and fields of life, one of which is to work towards achieving luxury and welfare of the community through procuring labor opportunities and eradicating unemployment, which is in fact a major source of crime in every community.

Another duty that must be carried out by the ruling authorities is strict supervision over the market in order to ban such economical diseases like monopoly and to remove the spoiled stocks that affect badly the public health.

A Muslim government is required to act as the vigilant eye that has full acquaintance with the affairs and concerns of the community. It is thus required in the least to spread knowledge and eradicate illiteracy, because any nation that sinks in ignorance will never be able to occupy any honorable position on the globe.

Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a), the father of social justice in Islam, adopted positively the affairs of the governmental employees, including the deputy governors, the functionaries, and the tax collectors and supervised their activities to the utmost scope. He thus would not entrust a governmental office to anybody before he investigated his decency, honesty, experience, and sincerity. This was in fact one of the most important political programs of the Imam ('a).

Strictly and rigorously, Imam Ali ('a) stood against Talhah and Al-Zubayr when they asked him to commission them to senior offices in the state, because he knew for sure that these two persons would misappropriate the public treasury and would treat the subjects unfairly, making use of such authority for their personal interests.

In the sight of Imam Ali ('a), authority must be used as a means of social reformation and as a reason for achieving the intellectual and economical rise of the community so that Muslims would be saved from the woes of ignorance, disease, and poverty.

He (S) thus insisted on his deputy governors to pay very much interest to the cultivation of lands and the increase of the individual incomes, warning them against putting the collection of taxes that are imposed on the peasants and other social classes as their one and only goal; lest, the country would not witness any economical recovery, the public life would not see bloom, and the Muslim community would not experience luxury.

Imam Ali ('a) also adopted the policy of strict and continuous supervision over the policies and behaviors of his officials; therefore, he would praise, honor, and pay tribute to the sincere governors who did their jobs perfectly away from any desire to rule over people.

On the other hand, he would immediately depose any governor who was proved to have deviated from proper behavior and betrayed his position. As for those whom were proved to have misappropriated the public treasury, the Imam ('a) would execute the religious penal laws of larceny on them. He did this with Ali ibn Al-Jahm when he stole the central public treasury.

A deep look into the epistles and instructions of Imam Ali ('a) to his officials and deputy governors demonstrates that these instructions represent a variety of colors of justice, components of honorable life, and sorts of equality. They also act as brilliant programs that represent the broadmindedness of Islam as well as its perfect treatment of all aspects of political life. These treatments are not subjected to the traditional effects; rather, they all are formed to protect man from any assault and to supply him with all of his rights perfectly.

Despite all of its experiments and systems of rule, humanity could not establish a system that guarantees human rights and goes along with the life demands like the system that was established by Imam Ali ('a) through his epistles and instructions to his deputy governors and officials.

For instance, no Muslim ruler or leader could ever find any political document that is full of systems of authority and administration and encompassing all human rights and duties towards the ruling system like the golden document that Imam Ali ('a) wrote to Malik Al-Ashtar when he entrusted him with the deputy governorship of Egypt and ordered him to apply the articles of this document to the people under his rule.

Another example of Imam Ali's strict supervision over the behaviors and affairs of his deputy governors

is that when he was informed that ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf, his deputy governor of Al-Basrah, was invited to a banquet, the Imam (‘a) sent him an epistle to deny this act, because the Imam (‘a) wanted their deputy governors to act as honestly and decently as possible and to be far away from any sort of seduction.

In brief, Imam Ali (‘a) adopted all the noble goals that achieve prosperity for Muslims and legislated the most wonderful laws and regulations in the field of administration. In fact, these laws and regulations must be studied objectively and comprehensively so that Muslims may benefit from them, follow their course, and provide them as an object of pride.

In the following lines, we will shed light on the affairs of the governmental officials in the reign of Imam Ali (‘a) as well as the obligations and responsibilities that his epistles to them demonstrated.

## **Responsibilities And Significance Of Deputy Governors**

The position of a governor is one of the most sensitive offices in the Islamic system of rule. If this position is carried out properly, the governor will be saved from the chastisement of Almighty Allah, but if the otherwise, the governor will be exposed to punishment in this world and the other world. Referring to this fact, Imam Ali (‘a) says,

*I have heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, ‘Any ruler who will come to rule over Muslims after me will be put on the edge of the Discriminating Bridge (between Paradise and Hellfire) and the angels will open the record of his deeds. If he is proved fair, Allah will save him due to his justice, but if he is proved unjust, the Discriminating Bridge will shake under his feet so disturbingly that his limbs will be separated. He will then fall into the Fire and the first organs of him that will feel the heat of the fire will be his nose and his cheeks.’* [1](#)

The Holy Prophet (S) is also reported to have described authority as follows:

**The first of holding a position of authority is blame, the second is regret, and the third is chastisement on the Resurrection Day. Excepted are only those who rule with justice. However, how can one rule with justice with his relatives?** [2](#)

On another occasion, the Holy Prophet (S) said,

**You will care very much for the positions of authority and then this will result in remorse and regret on the Resurrection Day. Excellent is the suckling and poor is the weanling.**[3](#)

## **Foundations Of Selecting The Deputy Governors**

One of the exclusive responsibilities of the head of a government is to select and appoint the persons who would be entrusted with offices of deputy governorship. In fact, such persons must be qualified enough for holding this position, and some of these qualifications are

- (1) Truthfulness,
- (2) Fulfillment of promises and pledges,
- (3) Restoring the trusts to their owners,
- (4) Evasion of any sort of betrayal,
- (5) Nice wording and good mannerism with the subjects,
- (6) Compassion and kindness to the orphans while sponsoring their affairs,
- (7) Adequate familiarity with the laws of Islam,
- (8) Self-control and capability of suppressing rage, and
- (9) Kind treatment with the subjects.[4](#)

## **Punishment Of The Unjust Governor**

Imam Ali (‘a) is reported to have said,

*The vilest of all people is the unjust ruler who strays off and makes others stray off the right path. He thus does away with a tradition that has been followed, and gives rise to an innovative matter that has been abandoned. I have heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, ‘The unjust ruler shall be brought, having no support and no apology to be excused, and thrown in Hellfire where he revolves like the revolving of hand mill. He then sticks to the bottom of Hellfire.’* [5](#)

## **Distancing From The Unjust Rulers**

Imam Ali (‘a) is reported to have said,

*Keep yourself away from the unjust ruler and do not secure yourself against the trickeries of Satan by repeating such mere words like, ‘I deny! I refuse!’ Verily, those who existed before you exposed themselves to perdition by repeating the same words.*

*If you insist on fondness of worldly pleasures and proximity to the rulers and your self leads you to a path other than the path of your prosperity, then you may at least control your tongue, because at situations of rage, nothing prevents from death. Do not investigate the affairs of the unjust rulers, do not divulge their secrets, and do not make yourself a place among them.* [6](#)

## **Rule Of The Foolish**

The Holy Prophet (S) warned against the rule of the foolish people who lack any amount of awareness and piety. He (S) is thus reported to have said to Ka’b,

**May Allah protect you from the rule of the foolish’ They are rulers who will rule after me. They neither follow my true guidance nor pattern after my practices. Whoever gives credence to their untruths and helps them oppress people, does not belong to me and I do not belong to him, and**

**he will not be allowed to approach my Divine Pond.**

**Conversely, whoever does not believe their lies and does not help them oppress people, is part of me and I am part of him, and he will be allowed to approach my Pond.**[7](#)

The Addicted to Authority

The Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said to a man who requested him for a senior office,

**We do not entrust people who desire for authority with our offices.**[8](#)

## **Duties Of The Deputy Governors**

Imam Ali (‘a) is reported to have said,

*A deputy governor is required to take charge of his affairs and to take care of his assistants so that the good deed of a good-doer and the evil deed of an evil-doer will not be concealed from him. He is then required not to leave both of these unrewarded and unpunished, because if he leaves them, the good-doer will be too reluctant to do more good deeds and the evil-doers will be encouraged to do more evil doings, causing the whole matter to be corrupted and the whole work to be wasted.* [9](#)

## **Teachings Of Imam Ali To The Deputy Governors**

In his famous epistle to Malik Al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (‘a) sketched a number of responsibilities the deputy governors must attend with regard to doing their jobs. Some of these responsibilities will be cited in the following points:

1) A deputy governor is responsible for showing mercy and compassion to the subjects and making no distinction between them. He must not act as a ferocious beast whose one and only concern is to misappropriate the sustenance of people and rob their economical resources.

Imam Ali (‘a) thus says,

*Habituate your heart to mercy for the subjects and to affection and kindness for them. Do not stand over them like greedy beasts who feel it is enough to devour them, since they are of two kinds, either your brother in religion or one like you in creation.*

2) A deputy governor must not use authority as a means of arrogance and insolence, because arrogance corrupts one’s faith. To get rid of arrogance, one must always consider the greatness and omnipotence of Almighty Allah.

The Imam (‘a) thus says,

*Do not say, 'I have been given authority, I should be obeyed when I order,' because it engenders confusion in the heart, weakens the religion, and takes one near ruin. If the authority in which you are placed produces pride or vanity in you, then look at the greatness of the realm of Allah over you and His might the like of which might you do not even possess over yourself. This will curb your haughtiness, cure you of your high temper, and bring back to you your wisdom, which had gone away from you.*

*Beware of comparing yourself to Allah in His greatness or likening yourself to Him in His power, for Allah humiliates every claimant of power and disgraces every one who is haughty.*

3) A deputy governor is required to act justly for the sake of Almighty Allah and to do justice to people.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Do justice for Allah and do justice towards the people, as against yourself, your near ones, and those of your subjects for whom you have a liking, because if you do not do so, you will be oppressive, and when a person oppresses the creatures of Allah, then, instead of His creatures, Allah becomes his opponent, and when Allah is the opponent of a person, He tramples his plea; and he will remain in the position of being at war with Allah until he gives it up and repents.*

*Nothing is more inductive of the reversal of Allah's bounty or for the hastening of His retribution than continuance in oppression, because Allah hears the prayer of the oppressed and is on the look out for the oppressors.*

4) A deputy governor is required to attend to the ordinary people, respond to their demands, carry out their desires, and try to cover up their faults, because they are regarded as the power of the state and the defense against the enemies.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*The way most coveted by you should be that which is the most equitable for the truth, the most universal by way of justice, and the most comprehensive with regard to the agreement among those under you, because the disagreement among the common people sweeps away the arguments of the chiefs can be disregarded when compared with the agreement of the common people.*

*No one among those under you is more burdensome to the ruler in the comfort of life, less helpful in distress, more disliking of equitable treatment, more tricky in asking favors, less thankful at the time of giving, less appreciative of reasons at the time of refusal, and weaker in endurance at the time of the discomforts of life than the chiefs.*

*It is the common people of the community who are the pillars of the religion, the power of the Muslims, and the defense against the enemies. Your leanings should therefore be towards them and your inclination with them.*

5) A deputy governor must honor the righteous citizens and must not equate them to the wrong-doers. He must also act nicely towards the subjects and try to alleviate their burdens.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*The virtuous and the vicious should not be in equal position before you, because this means dissuasion of the virtuous from virtue and persuasion of the vicious to vice. Keep everyone in the position, which is his. You should know that the most conducive thing for the good impression of the ruler on his subjects is that he should extend good behavior towards them, lighten their hardships, and avoid putting them to unbearable troubles.*

*You should therefore, in this way, follow a course by which you will leave a good impression with your subjects, because such good ideas will relieve you of great worries. Certainly, the most appropriate for good impression of you is he to whom your behavior has not been good.*

6) A deputy governor must keep alive all righteous traditions and must execute the laws that bring benefits to the publics.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Do not discontinue the good lives in which the earlier people of this community had been acting, by virtue of which there was general unity and through which the subjects prospered. Do not innovate any line of action, which injures these earlier ways because in that case, the reward for those who had established those ways will continue, but the burden for discontinuing them will be on you.*

*Keep on increasing your conversations with the scholars and discussions with the wise to stabilize the prosperity of the areas under you, and to continue with that in which the earlier people had remained steadfast.*

7) A deputy governor is required to judge between people according to the Holy Quran and the Prophetic traditions, because the answers to all questions can be found in these two sources of legislation.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Refer to Allah and His Prophet the affairs that worry you and matters that appear confusing to you, because, addressing the people whom Allah the Sublime wishes to guide, He said, 'O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Prophet and those vested with authority from among you; and then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Prophet if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day.'*

*Referring to Allah means to act according to what is clear in His Book and referring to the Prophet means to follow his unanimously agreed traditions concerning which there are no differences.*

8) A deputy governor must appoint for judging between people the best of judges who are broad minded enough to listen to the litigants, who are not enraged when people quarrel in their presence, who do not persist in wrong when they recognize the truth afterwards, who are not drifted by personal greed, who are too decent to follow their personal whims, who study carefully all the issues that are provided before them, who take enough time before they indulge in spurious issues, who are not bored with the frequent questions of people, who are strict enough to support the right against the wrong, and who are not affected by any word of praise or flattery.

A deputy governor is also required to supervise the judges and be acquainted with their verdicts lest they be in violation of the truth. He is also required to specify good salaries for the judges in order to prevent them from even thinking of receiving bribes, and to praise them frequently so that they will feel dignity and respect.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*For the settlement of disputes among people, select him who is the most distinguished of your subjects in your view. The cases coming before him should not vex him, disputation should not enrage him, he should not insist on any wrong point, and should not grudge accepting the truth when he perceives it; he should not lean towards greed and should not content himself with a cursory understanding of a matter without going thoroughly into it.*

*He should be most ready to stop to ponder on doubtful points, most regardful of arguments, least disgusted at the quarrel of litigants, most patient at probing into matters, and most fearless at the time of passing judgment. Praise should not make him vain and elation should not make him lean to any side. Such people are very few.*

*Then, very often check his decisions and allow him so much money as remuneration that he has no excuse worth hearing for not being honest and there remains no occasion for him to go to others for his needs.*

*Give him that rank in your audience for which no one else among your chiefs aspires, so that he remains safe from the harm of those around you. You should have a piercing eye in this matter, because this religion has formerly been a prisoner in the hands of vicious persons when action was taken according to passion and worldly wealth was sought.*

9) A deputy governor must not give any office to anybody before he checks and puts him to the test in order to realize the scope of his decency and sincerity. An office must not be given to someone on the strength of favoritism or nepotism, because this act is considered betrayal. Each office must be given to the most experienced in its field.

Qualifications like diffidence, modesty, and nobility are necessarily found in the persons to be commissioned to offices so that they will serve people and will not exceed the truth. The governmental

officials must be given salaries that cover their needs so that they will not turn to others or seize the others' financial dues.

At the same time, they must be put under strict supervision in order to evaluate their conducts. When they are found negligent, they must be then deposed and libeled openly so that others will learn lessons from them.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Thereafter, look into the affairs of your executives. Give them appointment after tests and do not appoint them according to partiality or favoritism, because these two things constitute sources of injustice and unfairness.*

*Select among them those who are people of experience and modesty, hailing from virtuous houses, having been previously in Islam, because such persons possess high manners and untarnished honor. They are the least inclined towards greed and they always have their eyes on the ends of matters.*

*Give them an abundant livelihood by way of salary, because this gives them the strength to maintain themselves in order not to have an eye upon the funds in their custody, and it would be an argument against them if they disobeyed your orders or misappropriated your trust. You should also check their activities and have people who report on them who should be truthful and faithful, because your watching their actions secretly will urge them to preserve trust with and to be kind to the people.*

*Be careful of assistants. If any one of them extends his hands towards misappropriation and the reports of your reporters reaching you confirm it, this should be regarded enough evidence. You should then inflict corporal punishment on him and recover what he has misappropriated. You should put him in a place of disgrace, blacklist him with the charge of misappropriation, and make him wear the necklace of shame for his offence.*

10) The secretaries appointed by a deputy governor must be highly trustworthy, faithful, and experienced. As they will look into the secrets of the State, they must be honest and they must not divulge these secrets to anyone. They are also required to be too well-mannered and polite to have the dare to violate the instructions of the governor or to defy him.

They must also provide the documents and formal articles before the deputy governor without delay and must not neglect answering the letters as accurately as possible. They must register whatever they receive and whatever they deliver. The criterion for choosing such secretaries must be their conduct before holding this office.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Then you should take care of your secretarial workers. Put the best of them in charge of your affairs. Entrust those of your letters, which contain your policies and secrets, to him who possesses the best*

*character, who is not elated by honors, lest he dares speak against you in common audiences.*

*He should also not be negligent in presenting the communications of your officers before you and issuing correct replies to them on your behalf and in matters of your receipts and payments. He should not make any damaging agreement on your behalf and should not fail in repudiating an agreement against you.*

*He should not be ignorant of the extent of his own position in matters, because he who is ignorant of his own position is even more ignorant of the position of others.*

*Your selection of these people should not be on the basis of your understanding of them, confidence, and your good impression, because people catch the ideas of the officers through affectation and personal service and there is nothing in it which is like well-wishing or trustfulness. You should rather test them by what they did under the virtuous people before you.*

*Take a decision in favor of one who has a good name among the common people and is the most renowned in trustworthiness, because this will be a proof of your regard for Allah and for him on whose behalf you have been appointed to this position (namely your Imam). Establish one chief for every department of work. He should not be incapable of big matters, and a rush of work should not perplex him. Whenever there is a defect in your secretaries, which you overlook, then you will be held responsible for it.*

11) A deputy governor must fix a time for the citizens during which he meets them, has an idea about their problems, and listens to their complaints. A deputy governor is also required to sit in a modest position free from any aspect of arrogance or grandeur. The citizens must be given the freedom to express their concerns away from the guards and officials of the governor, and when they use violent words or coarse manners, the governor must stand it peacefully, because a governor is required to be permissive enough to receive the subjects warmly.

Any bestowal of the governor must be given kindly, but not haughtily, and he is also required to use nice words of apology when he intends to prevent someone from something. Delaying response to the citizens is not recommended for the deputy governors; therefore, they must respond to the demands as soon as possible.

The Imam ('a) says,

*Fix a time for complainants wherein you make yourself free for them, and sit for them in common audience and feel humble therein for the sake of Allah who created you. On that occasion, you should keep away your army and your assistants such as the guards and the police so that anyone who likes to speak may speak to you without fear, because I have heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying in more than one place, **'The people among whom the right of the weak is not secured from the strong without fear will never achieve purity.'***

*Tolerate their awkwardness and inability to speak. Keep away from you narrowness and haughtiness; Allah would, on this account, spread over you the skirts of His mercy and assign the reward of obedience to Him for you. Whatever you give, give it joyfully, but when you refuse, do it handsomely and with excuses.*

*Then, there are certain matters, which you cannot avoid performing yourself. For example, replying to your officers when your secretaries are unable to do so, or disposing of the complaints of the people when your assistants shirk them. Finish every day the work meant for it, because every day has its own work.*

*Keep for yourself the better and greater portion of these periods for the worship of Allah, although all these items are for Allah provided the intention is pure and the subjects prosper thereby.*

12) A deputy governor is required to perform the obligatory devotional acts purely, sincerely, and perfectly and to lead moderate congregational prayers, because some people are not strong enough to endure long prayers.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*The particular thing by which you should purify your religion for Allah should be the fulfillment of those obligations, which are especially for Him. Therefore, devote to Allah some of your physical activity during the night and the day and whatever worship you perform for seeking nearness to Allah should be complete, without defect or deficiency, whatsoever physical exertion it may involve.*

*When you lead the prayers for the people, it should be neither too long as to be boring nor too short as to be wasteful, because among the people there are the sick as well as those who have needs of their own.*

*When the Messenger of Allah (S) sent me to Yemen, I enquired how I should offer prayers with them. He (S) replied, 'Perform the prayers as the weakest of them can perform, and be considerate to the believers.'*

13) A deputy governor must not keep himself away from the subjects, because this leads to ignorance about their affairs, makes them confuse the good with the bad and stop complaining to the governor about their problems. In fact, the complaints of people will never harm the governor, because in such complaints they either record a wrongdoing that afflicted them or request for justice and fairness.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Then, do not keep yourself secluded from the people for a long time, because the seclusion of those in authority from the subjects is a kind of narrow-sightedness and it causes ignorance about their affairs. Seclusion from them also prevents them from the knowledge of those things which they do not know and as a result they begin to regard big matters as small and small matters as big, good matters as bad and*

*bad matters as good, while the truth becomes confused with falsehood.*

*After all, a governor is a human being and he cannot have knowledge of things which people keep hidden from him. No writ is big on the face of truth to differentiate its various expressions from falsehood. Then, you can be one of two kinds of men: either you may be generous in granting rights and then why this hiding in spite of your discharging the obligations and good acts that you perform, or you are a victim of stinginess; in that case people will soon give up asking you since they will lose hope of generous treatment from you.*

*In spite of that, there are many needs of the people towards you, which do not involve any hardship on you, such as the complaint against oppression or the request for justice in a matter.*

*Further, a governor has favorites and people of easy access to him. They misappropriate things, they are high-handed, and they do not observe justice in matters. You should destroy the root of evil in the people by cutting away the causes of these defects. Do not make any land grants to your hangers on or supporters.*

*They should not expect from you the possession of land, which may cause harm to adjoining people over the question of irrigation or common services whose burden the grantees place on others. In this way, the benefit will be rather theirs than yours, and the blame will lie on you in this world and the next.*

14) A deputy governor is required to commit himself to the truth and to apply it to the close and the remote people equally, even if this would be too heavy for him to bear.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Allow rights to whomsoever it is due, whether near you or far from you. In this matter, you should be enduring and watchful even though it may involve your relations and favorites, and keep in view the reward of that which appears burdensome on you, because its reward is handsome.*

15) When the subjects suspect a deed of the governor, he is then required to make his apologies and clarify the reasons that made him do that deed.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*If the subjects suspect you of high-handedness, explain to them your position openly and remove their suspicion with your explanation, because this would mean exercise for your soul and consideration to the subjects while this explanation will secure your aim of keeping them firm in truth.*

16) A deputy governor must never establish his rule on bloodshed, because this will contribute greatly to the weakening and vanishing of the rule. Besides, bloodshed is never excused by Almighty Allah unless it is made according to the law of Islam in such states like self-defense or protection of the subjects.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*You should avoid shedding blood without justification, because nothing is more inviting of Divine retribution, greater in evil consequence, and more effective in the decline of prosperity and cutting short of life than the shedding of blood without justification. On the Day of Judgment, Allah the Glorified would commence giving His judgment among the people with the cases of bloodshed committed by them.*

*Therefore, do not strengthen your authority by shedding prohibited blood, because this will weaken and lower the authority, moreover destroy it and shift it. You cannot offer any excuse before Allah or before me for willful killing, because there must be the question of revenge in it.*

*If you are involved in it be error and you exceed in the use of your whip or sword, or are hard in inflicting punishment, as sometimes even a blow by the fist or a smaller stroke causes death, then the haughtiness of your authority should not prevent you from paying the blood price to the successors of the killed person.*

17) A deputy governor is required to release himself from any sign of self-conceit, which eventually leads to great evil. He is also warned against fondness of praise and commendation for the services he may make to the country, since it is his duty to serve the people and the country. A deputy governor is also required not to break any promise he has made to the subjects.

Imam Ali ('a) thus says,

*You should avoid self-admiration, having reliance in what appears good in yourself, and love of exaggerated praise, because this is one of the most reliable opportunities for Satan to obliterate the good deeds of the virtuous. Avoid showing the existence of obligation on your subjects for having done good deed to them or praising your own actions or making promises and then breaking them, because showing the existence of obligation destroys the good deed, self-praise takes away the light of truth, and breaking promises earns the hatred of Allah and of the people. Allah the Glorified says,*

***'Most hateful is it unto Allah that you say what you yourselves do it not.'*(4:29)**

18) Haste is not recommended for deputy governors, because it results in failure and disappointment. On the other hand, deliberation is the key to every success. A deputy governor is also warned against taking for himself exclusively a thing that all people must possess equally.

The Imam ('a) thus says,

*Avoid haste in matters before their time, slowness at their proper time, insistence on them when the propriety of action is not known, or weakens when it becomes clear. Assign every matter its proper place and do every job at the appropriate time. Do not appropriate to yourself that in which the people have an equal share, nor be regardless of matters, which have come to light with the excuse that you are accountable for others.*

*Shortly, the curtains of all matters will be raised from your view and you will be required to render redress to the oppressed. Have control over your sense of prestige, any outburst of anger, the might of your arm, and the sharpness of your tongue. Guard against all this by avoiding haste and by delaying severe action until your anger subsides and you gain your self- control. You cannot withhold yourself from this unless you bear in mind that you have to return to Allah.*

19) A deputy governor is warned against the consultants when they commit such discommended acts like finding faults with people in order to find themselves a place near the governor. The talebearers who inform against the subjects must not find themselves any place near the governor. The miserly, the coward, the greedy, and the people who have earlier worked as assistants of tyrannical rulers must be prevented from coming close to the governors.

The Imam (‘a) thus says,

*The one among the people under you who is furthest from you and the worst of them in your view should be he who is the most inquisitive of the shortcomings of the people, because people do have shortcomings and the ruler is the most appropriate person to cover them. Do not disclose whatever of it is hidden from you because your obligation is to correct what is manifest to you, while Allah will deal with whatever is hidden from you.*

*Therefore, cover shortcomings so far as you can; Allah would cover those of your shortcomings, which you should like to remain under cover from your subjects. Unfasten every knot of hatred in the people and cut away from yourself the cause of every enmity. Feign ignorance from what is not clear to you. Do not hasten to second a backbiter, because a backbiter is a cheat although he looks like those who wish well.*

## Ministry Of Complaints

Imam Ali (‘a) was the first ruler to establish a ministry for studying the complaints of the subjects. At Al-Kufah, he built a house which he called **bayt Al-mazalim** (*House of Complaints*) and instructed the wronged people to register their issues at that house. However, this ministry was developed during the reign of the ‘Abbasid dynasty to exceed the office of judicature.

Imam Ali (‘a) established this ministry to run all of the affairs that are related to the complaints of the subjects, such as:

- Studying the complaints that the subjects provide against the governors and governmental officials,
- investigating the unjust actions of the tax collectors who misappropriate the funds of the alms and financial duties,
- supervising the performance of the clerks and secretaries who are commissioned to run the public

treasuries,

- studying the complaints of the mercenaries and the officials when they are not paid their salaries,
- confiscating the funds robbed by the embezzlers and giving them back to their beneficiaries,
- supervising the public and private endowments in order to make sure that they have been used properly,
- executing the judgments of the judges and inspectors of weights and measures when they are suspended illegally,
- Observance of establishing the religious rituals and the congregational devotional acts, such as the Friday Prayers and the Feast Prayers, and
- imposing disciplinary punishments on the employees and officials who commit mistakes deliberately or neglect doing their jobs.

## Tax Collectors

The tax collectors are classified into two categories: The tribute collectors and the alms collectors.

The tribute collectors are those governmental officials whose job is to collect the funds that are imposed as tributes on the lands that were conquered by Muslims by force.

The alms collectors are those officials whose job is to collect the funds that are imposed on the properties that are subjected to the religious tax of zakat, such as the four yields (wheat, barley, dates, and raisins), the three cattle (camels, cows, and sheep), and the two coins (golden coins and silver coins), according to the laws of Islam.

About the moral standards that such collectors are required to observe, Imam Ali ('a) says,

*Move on with the fear of Allah Who is One and Who has no partner. Do not frighten any Muslim. Do not pass over his lands so as to make him feel unhappy. Do not take from him more than Allah's share in his property. When you go to a tribe, you should get down at their watering place instead of entering their houses.*

*Then, proceed towards them with peace and dignity until you stand among them. Then, salute them and do not be remiss in greeting them. Then, say to them, 'O servants of Allah, the vicegerent and representative (i.e. caliph) of Allah has sent me to you to collect from you Allah's share in your properties. Is there anything of His share in your properties? If so, give it to His vicegerent.'*

*If someone among them says, 'No,' then do not repeat the demand. If someone speaks to you in the*

*affirmative, then go with him without frightening, threatening, pressuring, or oppressing him. Take what he gives you such as gold or silver coins.*

*If he has cattle or camels, do not enter upon them save with his permission, because their major part is his. Therefore, when you get there, do not enter upon them like one who has full control over them or in a violent manner. Do not scare any animal, do not tease anyone, and do not let the owner feel grieved about anyone.*

*Divide the property into two parts and let the owner choose one. When he has chosen, do not object to it. Then, divide the remaining into two parts and let him choose one; and when he has chosen, do not raise any objection. Continue like this until only the quantity, which is enough to satisfy Allah's dues, remains. Then, take Allah's due from it.*

*If he disputes your action, allow his views, then mix the two separated parts and repeat what you had done before until you take Allah's due from his property. Do not take an old, decrepit broken-limbed, sick or unsound animal. Do not entrust the animals for custody except to one whom you trust to take care of Muslims' property until he hands it over to their chief who will distribute it.*

*Do not entrust it to anyone except he who is a well-wisher, God-fearing, trustworthy, and watchful, and who is not harsh on Muslims' property, nor makes them run too much, nor tires them, nor labors them. Then, send to us all that you have collected and we shall deal with it as Allah has ordered.*

*When your trustee takes over the animal, tell him that he should not separate the she-camel from its young and should not milk all its milk because that would affect its young, and also that he should not exert it in riding. In this matter, he should behave justly between it and all its companions. He should allow rest to camels that are tired, and drive with ease those whose hoofs have been rubbed off.*

*When you pass a water spring, stay the camels there for drinking and do not take them away from vegetated land to barren paths. You should allow them rest now and then and give them time near water and grass. In this way, when they reach us by leave of Allah, they will be fat with plenty of marrow and would not be fatigued or distressed. We will then distribute them according to the commands of the Book of Allah and the traditions of His Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Certainly, this will be a great source of reward for you and a means to secure guidance, if Allah so wills. [10](#)*

## **Interrogating And Calling The Governors To Account**

Imam Ali (‘a) used to lay strict supervision on the deputy governors and officials of his government. Once he discovered any item of disloyalty in their work, he would immediately depose them. He (‘a) was once informed that one of his tax collectors had misappropriated an amount of the funds that were the dues of Muslims. He therefore wrote the following letter to him:

*Now, I have come to know such a thing about you that if you have done so, then you have displeased*

*your Lord, disobeyed your Imam, and betrayed your trust. I have come to know that you have razed the ground and taken away whatever was under your feet and devoured whatever was in your hands. Send me your account and know that the accounting to Allah will be severer than that to the people; and that is an end to the matter.* [11](#)

## **Dismissal And Discharge Of Governors**

It is illegal to dismiss a deputy governor as long as he carries out his duties properly and commits himself to the instructions of the ruler. However, when a deputy governor commits a wrongdoing or deviates from the straight path, he must be then deposed of his office and brought to trial.

Sawdah the daughter of Imarah, a lady from the tribe of Hamdan, complained to Imam Ali (‘a) about the oppressive acts that one of his deputy governors had committed. The Imam (‘a) immediately deposed that governor from his office, wept heavily, and said,

*O Allah, You are the witness on them and me; I have never ordered them to oppress any of Your creatures or to neglect any of their duties towards You.* [12](#)

When the Imam (‘a) was informed that Al-Mundhir had contradicted the conducts of his father Al-Jarud who was well-known for his piety and righteousness, he wrote to him the following letter:

*Now, the good behavior of your father deceived me about you and I thought that you would follow his way and tread in his path. But according to what has reached me about you, you are not giving up following your passions and are not retaining any provision for the next world. You are making this world by ruining your next life, and doing good deeds to your kinsmen by cutting yourself off from religion.*

*If what has reached me about you is correct, then the camel of your family and the strap of your shoe are better than yourself. A man with qualities like yours is not fit to close a hole in the ground, nor for performing any deed, nor for increasing his position, nor for taking him as a partner in any trust, nor for trusting him against misappropriation. Therefore, proceed to me as soon as this letter of mine reaches you if Allah so wills.* [13](#)

## **The Armed Forces**

The armed forces are the protective shield of the community, the defenders against assaults and invasions, and the best organs of the government. About the armed forces, Imam Ali (‘a) says,

*Now the army is, by the will of Allah, the fortress of the subjects, the ornament of the ruler, the strength of the religion, and the means of peace. The subjects cannot exist without them while the army can be maintained only by the funds fixed by Allah in the revenues, through which they acquire the strength to fight the enemies, on which they depend for their prosperity, and with which they meet their needs.*

*These two classes cannot exist without the third class namely the judges, the executives and the secretaries who pass judgments about contracts, collect revenues, and who are depended upon in special and general matters.*

*Put in command of your forces the man who in your view is the best well-wisher of Allah, His Prophet, and your Imam. The most virtuous of them in heart and the highest of them in endurance is he who is slow in being enraged, who accepts excuses, who is kind to the weak, and who is strict with the strong; violence should not raise his temper and weakness should not keep him sitting.*

*Also, associate with considerate people from high families, virtuous houses, and decent traditions, then people of courage, valor, generosity, and benevolence, because they are repositories of honor and springs of virtues. Strive for their matters as the parents strive for their child.*

*Do not regard anything that you do to strengthen them as big nor consider anything that you have agreed to do for them as little so as to give it up, even though it may be small, because this will make them your well-wishers and create a good impression of you. Do not neglect to attend to their small matters, confining yourself to their important matters, because your small favors will also be of benefit to them while the important ones are such that they cannot ignore them.*

*That commander of the army should have such a position before you that he renders help to them equitably and spends from his money on them and on those of their families who remain behind so that all their worries converge on the one worry for fighting the enemy. Your kindness to them will turn their hearts to you.*

*The most pleasant thing for the rulers is the establishment of justice in their areas and the manifestation of the love of their subjects, but the subjects' love manifests itself only when their hearts are clean. Their good wishes prove correct only when they surround their commanders to protect them.*

*Do not regard their positions to be a burden over them and do not keep watching for the end of their tenure. Therefore, be broadminded with regard to their desires, continue praising them and recounting the good deeds of those who have shown such deeds, because the mention of good actions shakes the brave and rouses the weak, if Allah so wills.*

*Appreciate the performance of every one of them, do not attribute the performance of one to the other, and do not minimize the reward below the level of the performance. The high position of a man should not lead you to regard his small deeds as big, nor should the low position of a man make you regard his big deeds as small.*

## **Police Forces**

Imam Ali (‘a) was the first man in Islam to establish the police forces, which are considered one of the most sensitive organs of government. Giving them the name of *shurtat Al-khamis* (i.e. the military

police), the Imam (‘a) selected a group of the most virtuous soldiers who were characterized by high levels of decency and piety that the testimony of one of them was regarded as the testimony of two ordinary men.

Among these elite soldiers were the martyr Habib ibn Musahir Al-Asadi and Abdullah ibn Yahya Al-Hadrami to whom Imam Ali (‘a) is reported to have said,

*O Abdullah! Have these good tidings! Truly, the Messenger of Allah (S) had mentioned your father’s and your name within the list of the military police.*

The military police force was charged with many duties and responsibilities like arresting the criminals, adopting protective measures to prevent crimes, maintaining the public order and security, and safeguarding the people’s properties and prestige.

The Imam (‘a) also restricted the authorities of the police officers who were thus not allowed to arrest any person before it was proved that he had committed an offense that lied under the penal law of the Islamic legislation. Besides, if the police officers committed any violation, they would be brought before the court and exposed to the punishments decided by the Islamic code of religious law. [14](#)

## **The Duties Of The Ruler And The Subjects Towards Each Other**

In his discourse about the reciprocal duties of the ruler and the subjects towards each other, Imam Ali (‘a) says,

*So now, Allah the Glorified has, by placing me over your affairs, created my right over you and you too have a right over me like mine over you. A right is very vast in description but very narrow in equitability of action. It does not accrue to any person unless it accrues against him also, and right does not accrue against a person unless it also accrues in his favor.*

*If there is any right which is only in favor of a person with no corresponding right accruing against him, it is solely for Allah the Glorified and not for His creatures by virtue of His might over His creatures and by virtue of the justice permeating all His decrees.*

*Of course, He the Glorified has created His right over creatures that they should worship Him and has laid upon Himself the obligation of their reward equal to several times the recompense as a mark of His bounty and the generosity that He is capable of.*

*Then, from His rights, He the Glorified created certain rights for certain people against others. He made them so as to equate with one another. Some of these rights produce other rights. Some rights are such that they do not accrue except with others. The greatest of these rights that Allah the Glorified has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler.*

*This is an obligation which Allah the Glorified has placed on each other. He has made it the basis of their mutual affection, and an honor for their religion. Consequently, the ruled cannot prosper unless the rulers are sound, while the rulers cannot be sound unless the ruled are steadfast.*

*If the ruled fulfill the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfills their rights, then right attains the position of honor among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed, and the Prophetic traditions gain currency.*

*In this way, time will improve, the continuance of government will be expected, and the aims of the enemies will be frustrated. But if the ruled gain sway over the ruler, or the ruler oppresses the ruled, then difference crops up in every word, signs of oppression appear, mischief enters religion, and the ways of the Prophetic traditions are forsaken.*

*Then desires are acted upon, the commands of religion are discarded, diseases of the spirit become numerous, and there is no hesitation in disregarding even great rights, or in committing big wrongs. In such circumstances, the virtuous are humiliated while the vicious are honored, and there are serious chastisements from Allah the Glorified onto the people.*

*You should therefore counsel each other for the fulfillment of your obligations and cooperate with each other. However extremely eager a person may be to secure the pleasure of Allah, and however fully he strives for it, he cannot discharge his obligation for obedience to Allah the Glorified as is really due to Him, and it is an obligatory right of Allah over the people that they should advise each other to the best of their ability and cooperate with each other for the establishment of truth among them.*

*No person, however great his position in the matter of truth, and however advanced his distinction in religion may be, is above cooperation in connection with the obligations placed on him by Allah. Again, no man, however small he may be regarded by others, and however humble he may appear before eyes, is too low to cooperate or to be afforded cooperation in this matter.*

## **Imam Ali's Deputy Governors**

As soon as Imam Ali (‘a) came to power after the assassination of ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan, he started dismissing the tyrannical deputy governors and tax collectors that were appointed by ‘Uthman, because they were the source of chaos and disorder in the Islamic State and some of them misappropriated the public funds and seized the tributes for themselves.

Of course, ‘Uthman did not take into consideration efficiency and competence when he appointed these persons as deputy governors; rather, he put them in these offices on the strength of nepotism and favoritism.

Because Egypt was the center of the Muslim regions and districts, Imam Ali (‘a) appointed the best and most virtuous of his efficient and experienced men as deputy governors of this region. The first to hold

the office of the deputy governorship of Egypt was Qays ibn Sa'd.

## Qays Ibn Sa'd

Qays was the Holy Prophet's revered companion and the son of Sa'd ibn 'Abadah the elite of the tribe of Khazraj. Besides being a man of learning, he was tall, good looking, and of robust building. Charity, valor, and oration were his main characteristics. He was very far-sighted and thoughtful.

In those days, five persons were considered masters in politics and diplomacy. They were Mu'awiyah, Abu-Sufyan, 'Amr Ibn Al-'As, Al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah, Abdullah ibn Badil, and Qays ibn Sa'd. Of these, Abdullah ibn Badil and Qays ibn Sa'd were on the side of Imam Ali ('a).

Although Sa'd was an authority on politics, he never bypassed the requirements of the religion while making the political moves. Therefore, he used to say, 'If Islam were not in the way, I would make such moves that it would not be possible for the Arabs to counter them.' [15](#)

He remained in the company of the Holy Prophet (S) for ten years and learned from him the niceties of the religion. He took part in all of the military campaigns led by the Holy Prophet (S). In some of those battles, he had the privilege of carrying the Standard of Islam. He was also assigned for the collection of taxes by the Holy Prophet (S).

He inherited the qualities of charity and kindness from his father. During battles, he would even take loans to feed the men. Sometimes, he slaughtered the camels meant for his personal transport for this purpose. When the men mentioned about this event to the Holy Prophet (S), he said: **Generosity is the habit of his family.** [16](#)

When Imam Ali ('a) became the caliph in the month of Safar AH 36, he selected Qays for the governorate of Egypt because of his family background, capability, and political acumen. He asked him to organize an army and take it with him and to treat people kindly. He ('a) thus said to Qays,

*Go out to prepare your luggage and take with you the people that you trust and whomever you wish to accompany you, so that you will enter Egypt along with your army. This will create horror in the hearts of your enemies and will make your devotees feel dignified. Act kindly to the good-doers, use strict procedures against the suspicious, and act leniently towards the ordinary and the elite people, because lenience is always good omen.*

Qays answered, 'I will enter the city with an army, because if I do it not, I will never be able to enter it. However, I will give the army permission to join you if you need them. If you then intend to send them to a certain destination, they will be at your service.'

Since Qays was permitted to take a few persons with him, he selected a team of seven persons and left for Egypt. When he reached Egypt, he went to the minbar of the mosque and gave a sermon, saying, 'All

praise be to Allah Who has manifested the truth. He has crushed the falsehood and demeaned the unkind.

O people, we have owed our allegiance to the person who, after our Prophet (S), is superior to all persons that we know. O people, rise; and on the basis of the Book and the Prophetic traditions, owe your allegiance to him. If we do not follow the Book and the Prophetic traditions in your affairs, then you will not be bound by this pledge of allegiance!<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the masses pledged allegiance to Imam Ali (‘a).

This incident enraged Mu’awiyah so much that he went on plotting schemes and trying to take Qays to his side. He thus wrote a letter to Qays accusing him of having a role in the assassination of ‘Uthman and promising him to of anything he would ask for if he would join him. Qays however answered back with a letter of nice words and dexterous purport.

When Mu’awiyah could not find any gap in Qays’ letter, he sent him another letter confirming what he had mentioned in the first one. However, Qays answered back that he would never give up his pledge to the true leader and would never obey Mu’awiyah.

Mu’awiyah then invented another scheme when he spread the rumors that Qays had paid allegiance to him. When these rumors reached Imam Ali (‘a), he became very sad. However, the Imam (‘a) had to depose Qays from his office and appointed Malik Al-Ashtar or Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr in his place. <sup>18</sup>

### Malik Al-Ashtar

Malik Al-Ashtar is one of the prominent persons in Islam and one of the heroes. He dedicated his entire lifetime to serving Almighty Allah and the religion.

Faithfully and earnestly, he stood by Imam Ali (‘a) and defended him under the harshest circumstances. Conferring honor to the great standing and eminent struggle of Malik, Imam Ali (‘a) declared,

*Malik’s position to me was just like my position to the Messenger of Allah.*

After the Imam (‘a) deposed Qays ibn Sa’d from the office of the deputy governorship of Egypt, he appointed Malik in that office due to his high-ranking personality, outstanding proficiency, and full comprehension of the political and administrative affairs. Besides the golden epistle that the Imam (‘a) gave to Malik, he sent him two more letters. The first comprised the Imam’s view about Malik’s standing and nobility of character. This letter reads as follows:

*From the servant of Allah Ali the Leader of the Believers to the people who became wrathful for the sake of Allah when He was disobeyed on His earth, His rights were ignored, and oppression had spread its coverings over the virtuous as well as the vicious, on the local as well as the foreigner. Consequently, no good was acted upon nor any evil was avoided.*

*Now, I send to you a man from among the servants of Allah who allows himself no sleep in days of danger, nor does he shrink from the enemy at critical moments. He is severer on the wicked than a blazing fire. He is Malik ibn Al-Harith, our brother from the tribe of Madhhij. Therefore, listen to him and obey his orders that accord with the truth, because he is a sword among the swords of Allah, whose edge is not dull and which does not miss its victim.*

*If he orders you to advance, you must then advance; and if he orders you to stay, you must then stay, because he surely neither advances or attacks nor puts anyone backward or forward save with my command. I have preferred him for you rather than for myself because of his being your well-wisher and because of the severity of his harshness over your enemies. [19](#)*

The second letter sent by Imam Ali ('a) to Malik Al-Ashtar demonstrated the tragic acts through which the Imam ('a) had to go after the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S). The letter reads as follows:

*Now, Allah the Glorified deputed Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his descendants) as a warner for all the worlds and a witness for all the prophets. When the Prophet expired, the Muslims quarreled about power after him. By Allah, it never occurred to me, and I never imagined, that after the Prophet, the Arabs would snatch away the caliphate from the members of his house (i.e. the **Ahl Al-Bayt**), nor that they would take it away from me after him, but I suddenly noticed people surrounding the man to swear him allegiance.*

*I therefore withheld my hand until I saw that many people were reverting from Islam and trying to destroy the religion of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his descendants). I then feared that if I did not protect Islam and its people and there occurred in it a breach or destruction, it would mean a greater blow to me than the loss of power over you which was, in any case, to last for a few days of which everything would pass away as the mirage passes away, or as the cloud scuds away.*

*Therefore, in these happenings, I rose until wrong was destroyed and disappeared, and religion attained peace and safety.*

*By Allah, if I had encountered them alone and they had been so numerous as to fill the earth to the brim, I would not have worried or become perplexed. I am clear in myself and possess conviction from Allah about their misguidance and my guidance. I am hopeful and expectant that I will meet Allah and win His good reward.*

*But I am worried that silly and wicked people will control the affairs of the entire community, with the result that they will grab the funds of Allah as their own property and make His people slaves<sup>20</sup>, fight with the virtuous, and ally with the sinful.*

*Indeed, there is among them he who drank wine and who was whipped by way of punishment fixed by Islam, and there is he who did not accept Islam until he had secured financial gain through it. If this had not been so, I would not have insisted on gathering you, reprehending you, mobilizing you, and urging*

*you for jihad; but if you refuse and show weakness, I will leave you.*

*Do you not see that the boundaries of your cities have diminished, your populated areas have been conquered, your possessions have been snatched away, and your cities and lands have been attacked? May Allah have mercy on you, get up to fight your enemy and do not remain confined to the earth, otherwise you will face oppression and suffer ignominy and your fate will be the worst. The warrior should be wakeful because if he sleeps, the enemy does not sleep; and that is an end to the matter. [21](#)*

As has been previously mentioned, Imam Ali ('a), besides these two letters, sent a golden epistle to Malik Al-Ashtar in which he discussed all the affairs related to the human rights and the rights and duties of the rulers towards their subjects. The majority of the paragraphs of the golden epistle has been earlier mentioned with some comments.

The Imam ('a) ended the epistle with the following words:

*It is necessary for you to recall how matters went with those who preceded you, be it a government, a great tradition, a precedent of our Prophet (may Allah bless him and his descendants), or the obligatory commands contained in the Book of Allah.*

*Then, you should follow them as you have seen us acting upon them and should exert yourself in following that I have enjoined upon you in this document in which I have exhausted my pleas on you, so that if your heart advances towards its passions, you may have no plea in its support.*

*I ask Allah through the extent of His mercy and the greatness of His power of giving a good inclination that He may prompt me and you to advance a clear plea before Him and His creatures in a manner that may attract His pleasure along with handsome praise among the people, good effect in the country, an increase in prosperity, and a heightening of honor; and that He may allow me and you to die a death of virtue and martyrdom.*

*Surely, we have to return to Him. Peace be on the Messenger of Allah. May Allah show His blessings and plentiful salutation on him and on his pure and chaste descendants; and that is an end to the matter.*

## **Martyrdom Of Malik**

On his way to Egypt to assume his new office, Malik Al-Ashtar met Nafi', a manumitted slave of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, whom Mu'awiyah had entrusted with the wicked mission of assassinating Malik with poison. Nafi' was so tactful that he could convince Malik to accompany him to Egypt. In the middle of their journey, Nafi' served Malik with some honey that he had poisoned.

Once Malik had that honey, the poison spread in his body and killed him, while Nafi' fled to Mu'awiyah to convey this news to him. Of course, it was happy news for Mu'awiyah who, expressing his joy, gathered people and said to them, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib had two hands. In the Battle of Siffin, I could cut off one of

them; namely, ‘Ammar ibn Yasir, and today, I could cut off the other; namely, Malik Al-Ashtar.’[22](#)

When this news was conveyed to Imam Ali (‘a), he became so sad and started shedding tears for the martyrdom of the great person whose life was a role- model of serving the Imam (‘a).

Declaring the martyrdom of Malik, Imam Ali (‘a) said,

*We are Allah’s, and to Him shall we be returned. All praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds. O Allah, I refer the death of Malik to You alone, because his death is one of the misfortunes of time. May Allah have mercy upon Malik; he did fulfill his promise, complete his vow, and meet his Lord.*

*Although we have habituated ourselves to keeping steadfastness at all misfortunes after our having been stricken by the misfortune of losing the Messenger of Allah (S), this is indeed one of the most catastrophic misfortunes.* [23](#)

*How exceptional man Malik was! What is Malik? If I describe him as mountain, he is surely the most unshakable piece of a mountain. If I describe him as rock, he is surely the most rigid rock. By Allah, the death of Malik has saddened a group of people and, at the same time, has gladdened another. For the like of Malik should weepers weep. However, there is none like Malik.* [24](#)

## **Muhammad Ibn Abi-Bakr**

After the martyrdom of Malik Al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (‘a) assigned Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr as the deputy governor of Egypt and furnished him with the following instructions in a form of an epistle:

*Behave humbly with the people, keep yourself lenient, meet them large- heartedly, and accord them equal treatment so that the big should not expect injustice from you in their favor and the low should not be despondent of your justice to them. Allah the Sublime will certainly question you, O community of His creatures, about your actions, small or big, open or concealed. If He punishes you, it is because you have been oppressive, and if He forgives, then it is because He is the Most Generous.*

*Know, O creatures of Allah, that the God-fearing (people) have shared the joys of this transient world as well as the next coming world, for they shared with the people of this world in their worldly matters while their people did not share with them in the matters of the next world.*

*They lived in this world in the best manner of living, ate the choicest food, and, consequently, they enjoyed herein all that the people with ease of life enjoyed, and secured from it what the haughty and the vain secured. Then, they departed from it after taking provision enough to take them to the end of their journey and after doing a profitable transaction.*

*They tasted the pleasure of renouncing the world in this world, and they firmly believed that on the coming day in their next life, they would be neighbors of Allah, where their call would not be repulsed nor would their share of pleasure be small.*

*Therefore, O creatures of Allah, be afraid of death and its measures and keep ready all that is needed for it. It will come as a big event and a great affair, either as a good in which there will never be any evil, or an evil in which there will never be any good. Who is nearer to Paradise than he who works towards it, and who is nearer to Hell than he who works for it?*

*You are being chased by death. If you stop, it will catch you, and if you run away from it, it will grip you. It is more attached to you than your reflection. Death is tied to your forelocks while the world is being wrapped up from behind you. Therefore, fear the Fire whose hollow is deep, whose flames are severe, and whose punishment is novel.*

*It is a place wherein there is no mercy. No call is heard in it. No pain is healed in it. If it is possible for you to have severe fear of Allah and to rest hope in Him, then do both these things because every individual can have hope in His Lord to the extent of his fear of His Lord. Certainly, the most hopeful person with Allah is he who fears Him most.*

*O Muhammad the son of Abu-Bakr, know that I have given you charge of Egypt, which is my biggest force. So, you are duty-bound to oppose your passions and serve as a shield against your religion even though you may have only an hour in the world; and do not enrage Allah for pleasing others because Allah is such that He may take the place of others, but others cannot take the place of Allah.*

*Perform the prayers at the appointed time. Do not perform them earlier for the sake of available leisure nor delay it on account of pre-occupation. Remember that every act of yours is dependent on your prayer.*

*The leader of guidance and the leader of destruction cannot be equal, nor the friend of the Prophet and the enemy of the Prophet. The Messenger of Allah (S) has said to me, **'In respect of my people, I am afraid neither of a believer nor of an unbeliever. As for the believer, Allah will afford him protection because of his belief; and as for the unbeliever, Allah will humiliate him because of his unbelief. But I am afraid about every one of you who is hypocrite in his heart and learned of speech. He speaks what you hold excellent but does what you dislike.*** [25](#)

Abu-Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir Al-Tabari, in his famous book entitled **Tarikh Al-Umam wa'l-Muluk** and famously known as **Tarikh Al-Tabari**, has recorded that Abdullah ibn Abi-Rafi', the manumitted slave of the Holy Prophet (S), wrote down the following epistle that Imam Ali ('a) sent to Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr on the first of Ramadan, AH 36:

*In the Name of Allah; the All-beneficent, the All-merciful (I begin). This is the epistle of the servant of Allah, Ali, the Leader of the Believers, to Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr as he appoints him as the deputy governor of Egypt.*

*He (i.e. Imam Ali) orders him (i.e. Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr) to fear Allah in his covert and overt affairs and to dread Allah the Almighty and All-majestic in absence and presence. He orders him to act leniently towards the Muslims, harshly towards the sinful, and fairly towards the non-Muslims who live*

*under the protection of the Muslim State.*

*He also orders him to give the oppressed people their dues, to be severe to the oppressors, to pardon people, and to lean on charitable acting as much as he can, for Allah will surely reward the doers of charity and chastise the criminals.*

*He orders him to invite all those who are under his rule to obedience and abiding by unity among them, because if they do so, they will win such good end result and abundant reward that they can neither estimate nor recognize its reality.*

*He orders him to collect the tributes of the lands following the same program that was followed by those who had collected them before him; he should thus neither decrease nor add to it. He should then distribute the funds of the tributes in the same manner that was followed before him.*

*He should also behave humbly with people and treat them equally when he meets and receives them. Thus, the faraway and the close should be treated equally as long as they follow the truth.*

*He orders him to judge between people with justice, to establish equity, not to follow his personal whims, and not to fear the censure of any censurer in matters appertained to Allah the Almighty and All-majestic. Verily, Allah-majestic be the praising of Him-is always with those who fear Him and prefer obedience to Him and to His orders rather than obedience to anything or anyone else. [26](#)*

## **A Serious Letter Of Mu' Awiyah To Muhammad Ibn Abi-Bakr**

This is an important and serious letter that Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan sent in reply to a letter sent to him by Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr, inviting him to pay homage to Imam Ali ('a).

In this letter, Mu'awiyah confirmed that all the calamities that afflicted the Muslim community was originally because of Abu-Bakr and 'Umar. He thus introduced these two persons as the only ones responsible for every event that took place after the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S).

This is the text of this letter:

'From Mu'awiyah the son of Sakhr to Muhammad the son of Abu-Bakr who is impious to his father:

I have received your missive in which you have mentioned Allah, His greatness, omnipotence, and authority in an appropriate way and you have mentioned other articles about Allah's choosing His Prophet as well as many other words that you had composed and invented, while these words demonstrate the fragility of your opinion and imply reproach of your father.

In these words, you have referred to the right of the son of Abu Talib as well as his precedence, his relation tie with Allah's Prophet, his support for him, and his sacrifices for him in all horrible and breathtaking situations. So, in your argument against me and finding fault with me, you have presented

the virtues of someone other than you.

Thank Allah for He has taken away this virtue from you and given it to someone else. We, plus your father, since the lifetime of our Prophet, used to recognize the precedence of the son of Abu- Talib to be binding on us, and his virtue to be surpassing us.

After Allah had chosen for His Prophet what He has in possession, fulfilled what He had promised him, made prevalent his call, and made overcoming his arguments, He took him (i.e. the Prophet) towards Him (i.e. Almighty Allah). Then, your father and his *Faruq* (i.e. 'Umar) were the first to rob his right and to infringe his order, although these two had already agreed to do this.

They then called him (i.e. Imam Ali) to pledge allegiance to them, but he was too slow and too dilatory to respond to them. As a result, they determined to face him with grievous acts and decided to apply to him the gravest thing (i.e. killing).

However, he then swore allegiance and surrendered to them; therefore, they neither gave him any share in their affairs nor did they apprise him of their confidential matters. When they passed away and ceased to exist, they appointed 'Uthman ibn 'Affan after them, following their guidance and patterning after them.

However, your acquaintance and you censured him so intensely that you both made even the remote disobedient people revolt against him. You also incurred the animosity of him secretly and openly, and revealed your rancor towards him until you attained what you had wanted against him.

So, be careful, son of Abu-Bakr, for you will very soon face the bad consequence of your deeds. If you only measure your tiny size with your own tool, you will find that you are too short to be parallel or equivalent to one whose forbearance is as weighty as mountains, whose lance cannot be bent under duress, and whose endurance cannot be attained by any one known for his tolerance.

It is your father who had paved the way to him (i.e. Mu'awiyah), and constructed and established his sovereignty. If our current course is true, then your father was its originator, but if it is false and wrong, then it is still your father who founded it, and we are only partners of him, since we followed his guidance and patterned after his deeds.

Had it not been for what your father had already done, we would not have opposed the son of Abu Talib; rather, we would certainly have succumbed to him. However, when we saw your father doing this before us, we only imitated and took after him. So, you must first of all censure your father as you like; otherwise, you must leave this issue. Peace be upon those who turn from their errors and repent remorsefully.<sup>27</sup>

This letter sheds light on the reason for Mu'awiyah's armed rebellion against Imam Ali ('a). In his rebellion, Mu'awiyah, as he claims, depended upon the actions of Abu-Bakr and 'Umar who had taken over power by force and usurped Imam Ali ('a) from his right, paving the way for Mu'awiyah and his likes

to fight and wage war against the Imam (‘a).

## Martyrdom Of Muhammad

Mu’awiyah sent an army under the commandership of ‘Amr ibn Al-’As to occupy Egypt during the deputy governorship of Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr. When the two armies encountered each other in a battle, the Egyptian army could beat Mu’awiyah’s, but Mu’awiyah supplied his army with a great number of troops and a fierce combat took place during which the Egyptian army was defeated and Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr had no other way than hiding himself in a site of ruins.

Finally, Muhammad was captured, executed, and his body was cast on a carcass of a donkey and then set to fire after his head was cut off and sent as present to Mu’awiyah. [28](#)

Upon hearing the news of Muhammad’s martyrdom, Imam Ali (‘a), expressing his grief, said,

*He (Muhammad) was one of my beloved persons and he was my foster son.* [29](#)

*Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr, May Allah have mercy on him, has been martyred. We seek his reward from Allah. As a son, he was a well-wisher, a hard worker, a sharp sword, and a bastion of defense.* [30](#)

## Qutham Ibn ‘Abbas

Appointed by Imam Ali (‘a) as the deputy governor of Makkah, Qutham ibn Al-’Abbas, the Imam’s cousin, was the son of the first woman to convert to Islam after the great lady Khadijah. Because of his piety and generosity, Qutham enjoyed a remarkable standing with Imam Ali (‘a).

Mu’awiyah sent some men in the garb of pilgrims to Makkah in order to create sensation in the peaceful atmosphere of the place, by taking common men into their confidence, by a show of piety and God-fearing and then convincing them that Imam Ali (‘a) had instigated the people against ‘Uthman and in the end succeeded in having him killed.

In this way, they were to hold him responsible for the killing of ‘Uthman and to turn the people against him, and also to incline the people towards Mu’awiyah by mentioning the greatness of his character, the sublimity of his manners, and fabricated stories of his generosity.

However, when the men whom Imam Ali (‘a) had put on the job gave him the information, he wrote this letter to Qutham to keep an eye on their movements and to put a stop to their mischief-makers:

*My spy in the west has written to me telling me that some people of Syria have been sent for Hajj who are blind of heart, deaf of ears, and devoid of eyesight. They confound the truth with vanity, obey men in disobeying Allah, claim the milk of the world in the name of religion, and trade in the pleasures of this world by forsaking the rewards of the virtuous and the God-fearing.*

*No one achieves good except he who acts for it, and no one is awarded the recompense of evil except*

*he who commits it. Therefore, behave yourself in your duties like an intelligent, experienced, well-wishing, and wise man who follows his superior and is obedient to his Imam. You should avoid what you may have to explain. Do not rise up in riches nor lose courage in distress; and that is an end to the matter.*[31](#)

On another occasion, Imam Ali (‘a) sent the following epistle to Qutham:

*Now, make arrangements for the Hajj pilgrimage by the people, remind them of the days to be devoted to Allah, sit for giving them audience morning and evening, explain the law to the seeker, teach the ignorant, and discuss with the learned. There should be no intermediary between you and the people except your tongue and no guard save your own face.*

*Do not prevent any needy person from meeting you, because if the needy is returned unsatisfied from your door in the first instance, then even doing it thereafter will not bring you praise.*

*See what has been collected with you of the funds of Allah in the public treasury and spend it over the persons with families, the distressed, the starving, and the naked, at your end. Then, send the remaining to us for distribution to those who are on this side.*

Ask the people of Makkah not to charge rent from lodgers, because Allah the Glorified says, “**alike; for the dweller therein as well as the stranger.**’

The dweller, here, means he who is living there, while the stranger means he who is not among the people of Makkah comes for the Hajj Pilgrimage from outside. May Allah grant you and us promptitude for seeking His love by doing good acts; and that is an end to the matter.[32](#)

## **Sahl Ibn Hunayf**

When Imam Ali (‘a) marched to lead his army to the Battle of the Camel, he appointed Sahl ibn Hunayf Al-Ansari as the deputy governor of Al-Madinah.

When the Imam (‘a) was informed that a group of the people of Al-Madinah joined Mu’awiyah, he sent the following epistle to Sahl:

*Now, I have come to know that certain persons from your side are stealthily going over to Mu’awiyah. Do not feel sorry for their numbers so lost to you or for their help of which you are deprived. It is enough that they have gone into misguidance and you have been relieved of them. They are running away from guidance and truth and advancing towards blindness and ignorance.*

*They are seekers of this world, they are proceeding to it, and they are leaping towards it. They have known justice, seen it, heard it, and appreciated it. They have realized that here, to us, all men are equal in the matter of the truth. Therefore, they ran away to selfishness and partiality. Let them remain remote and far away.*

*By Allah, surely they have not gone away from oppression and joined justice. In this matter, we only desire Allah to resolve for us its hardships and to level for us its unevenness, if Allah wills; and that is an end to the matter. [33](#)*

### **'Ubaydullah Ibn Al-'Abbas**

During the reign of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, the deputy governor of Yemen, Ya'la ibn Munabbih, had embezzled the funds of the tributes and fled to Makkah, [34](#) using these funds for mobilizing troops to support 'A'ishah in her war against Imam Ali ('a).

When he became the caliph, Imam Ali ('a) appointed 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Abbas as the deputy governor of Yemen. When Mu'awiyah mobilized an army under the commandership of Busr ibn Arta'ah to raid on Yemen, 'Ubaydullah fled to Al-Kufah to survive the onslaught of Busr.

However, Busr the criminal arrested the two children of 'Ubaydullah and killed them as one of the most hideous crimes of the representatives of Mu'awiyah. This incident saddened Imam Ali ('a) too much that he invoked Almighty Allah's curse upon Busr, saying, *'O Allah, please divest Busr of his faith and reason.'*

### **'Umar Ibn Abi-Salamah**

Imam Ali ('a) appointed 'Umar ibn Abi-Salamah Al-Makhzumi as the deputy governor of Bahrain. The foster child of the Holy Prophet (S) and the son of the virtuous lady Ummu-Salamah, 'Umar was born in Abyssinia in the second year of Hegira. He was exceptionally sincere and loyal to Imam Ali ('a).

In the Battle of the Camel, 'Umar's mother sent him to fight to the side of Imam Ali ('a) and supplied him with a letter to the Imam ('a) in which she wrote down, *'Had it not been that women are not allowed to participate in jihad, I would surely have come to support you and fight before you. However, this is my son, the peer of my soul. I thus please you, O Leader of the Believers, to take care of him and lead him to the fields of decency.'*

However, Imam Ali ('a) deposed 'Umar from his office and wrote him the following epistle;

*Now, I have decided to entrust Al-Nu'man ibn 'Ajlun Al-Zurqi with the office of the deputy governorship of Yemen and depose you from this office although this must not be understood as dispraise of you or blame. Certainly, you have done your job excellently and fulfilled the trust wonderfully.*

*Now, you may come to us while you are free from any accusation, censure, or sinning. By doing so, I only intend to march towards the oppressive people of Syria and I thus want you to be in my company, because you are one of those upon whom I depend in struggling against my enemy and establishing the pillar of the religion, if Allah wills. [35](#)*

## Al-Nu' Man Ibn 'Ajlan

The spokesman and poet of the Ansar, Al-Nu'man ibn 'Ajlan composed some poetic verses, criticizing Abu-Bakr for holding the position of caliphate, which is the right of Ali ibn Abi Talib('a).

When Al-Nu'man was appointed as the governor of Bahrain by Imam Ali ('a), he bestowed big funds upon his family members, and when the Imam ('a) was informed about this, he deposed him from this office—the reason that made him flee and join Mu'awiyah. [36](#)

## Mikhnaf Ibn Sulaym

Imam Ali ('a) appointed Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym Al-Azdi Al-Ghamidi—one of the companions of the Holy Prophet (S) and Imam Ali ('a) and the warriors of the Battle of Siffin—as his deputy governor of Isfahan, a city in central Persia.

He ('a) wrote the following instructive epistle to Mikhnaf:

*He (Imam Ali) orders him to fear Allah in his secret matters and hidden actions, where there is no witness except Him and no one watches save Him. He also orders him that whatever he does in obedience to Allah openly should not be different from what he does secretly. He whose hidden position is not different from his open position and whose action is not different from his words has discharged his obligation and his worship is pure.*

*He also orders him that he should not harass them, should not be harsh on them, and should not turn away from them because of superiority of official position over them, for they are brethren in faith and helpers in the recovery of levies.*

*Certainly, you have a fixed share and a known right in this levy, and there are other sharers who are poor, weak, and starving. We shall discharge your rights. So, you should discharge their rights. If you do not do so, you will have the largest number of enemies on the Day of Judgment.*

*How wretched the man is when his enemies in the view of Allah are the needy, the destitute, the beggars, the turned away, the indebted, and the penniless travelers! He who treats the trust slightly, indulges in treachery, and does not keep himself and his faith untarnished by it, has certainly secured humiliation in this world, and his humiliation and disgrace in the next world will be greater.*

*Surely, the greatest treachery is the treachery against the Muslim community, and the most hideous deceit is the deceit towards the Muslim leaders; and that is an end to the matter. [37](#)*

When Imam Ali ('a) was determined to fight against Mu'awiyah, he sent the following letter to Mikhnaf asking him for support and aid:

*Peace be upon you! Beforehand, I praise Allah save Whom there is no god. Now, it is obligatory upon*

*those who recognize Almighty Allah and the truth to struggle against those who have turned aside from the truth on account of their deliberate abandonment of it and those who have penetrated deeply into the somnolence of blindness and deviation voluntarily.*

*Verily, Allah is pleased with only those who please Him and is wrathful with those who disobey Him. We have been determined to march to these people who have dealt with the servants of Allah contrary to what Allah has revealed, misappropriated the public funds, refrained from executing the religious laws, muffled the truth, caused mischief to appear in the lands, and chosen for the sinful, but not the faithful, as their adherents.*

*When a saint of Allah deemed grave their misdeeds, they would hate, eliminate, and deprive him of his dues; but if a wrongdoer helped them oppress people, they would love, approximate (him to them), and treat him kindly. They have thus insisted on oppression and agreed on violating the truth. However, they have already warded off from the truth, helped each other in sinning, and acted wrongfully.*

*Once you receive this letter of mine, you may appoint the most trustworthy of your companions in your opinion as your representative and come to us so that we both will encounter our enemy who has violated the prohibitions of Almighty Allah. By doing so, you will enjoin the right, forbid the evil, join those who are in the right, and disown those who are in the wrong.*

*Indeed, neither you nor we can dispense with the reward of jihad. Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs. There is neither might nor power except with Allah the All-high and All-great. [38](#)*

### **Masqalah Ibn Hubayrah**

Imam Ali (‘a) employed Masqalah ibn Hubayrah Al-Shaybani as his deputy governor of Ardashir-Khurrah, one of the districts of Persia that included the city of Shiraz as well as other cities. When the Imam (‘a) was informed that Masqalah distributed the funds of the public treasury among poets, members of his tribe, and everyone who would ask him for money improperly, he wrote the following epistle to him:

*Now, I have been informed against you that you are distributing the funds of Muslims among your family members and among every one who comes to you such as the beggars, the parties, and the untruthful poets as same as you distribute walnuts. However, I still cannot believe this about you.*

*I swear by Him Who split the grains and fashioned the souls that I will inspect this matter as effectively as possible; if I then find out that it was true, you will then find yourself humiliated in my sight. So, do not be one of the losers by their deeds; whose labor is lost in this world’s life and they think that they are well versed in skill of the work of hands. [39](#)*

However, Masqalah, in a reply to the Imam’s letter, confirmed that he had not embezzled even one coin from the public funds and asked Imam Ali (‘a) to depose him if the information against him would be

proven true.

When the Imam ('a) received this letter, he said, '*I believe that Abu'l-Fasl (i.e. Masqalah) is truthful.*' [40](#)

Unfortunately, Masqalah finally fled to Mu'awiyah after he had imposed upon himself debts that he could not pay back. [41](#)

## [Kumayl Ibn Ziyad](#)

One of the most brilliant companions of Imam Ali ('a), Kumayl ibn Ziyad Al-Nakha'i occupied a remarkable standing in the view of Imam Ali ('a) who entrusted him with his special affairs and secrets, fed him with his most outstanding instructions, and taught him the highest nobilities of character, finest precepts, and most effective words, one of which was the famous supplicatory prayer known as the Supplication of Kumayl, because Kumayl was the reporter.

Imam Ali ('a) assigned Kumayl as the deputy governor of Hit, one of the towns of Baghdad that is situated on the bank of River Euphrates, forming the borders between Iraq and Syria. [42](#)

Mu'awiyah mobilized six thousand soldiers under the commandership of Sufyan ibn 'Awf and ordered them to raid on Hit, Al-Anbar, and Al-Mada'in and damage their peoples. When Sufyan came to Hit, he found no power to face him; he therefore raided on Al-Anbar where there was a military base of Imam Ali's army under the commandership of Kumayl ibn Ziyad.

Along with the remaining two hundred soldiers, Kumayl marched to fight against Mu'awiyah's soldiers before he had the permission of Imam Ali ('a). As a result, a battle took place during which about thirty soldiers of Imam Ali's army were killed and the soldiers of Mu'awiyah could plunder the city of Al-Anbar and return to Syria with victory.

When the news reached Imam Ali ('a), he criticized Kumayl and sent him the following letter:

*Now, the neglecting by a man of what he has been made responsible for and doing what is to be done by others is a manifest weakness and a ruinous sight. Certainly, your advance on the people of Qirqisiya, and your leaving the arsenals over which we had set you, without anyone to protect them or to repulse the enemy force, savored of shattered thinking.*

*In this way, you served like a bridge for the enemy who came marauding on your allies while your arms were weak, you had no awe around you; you could not prevent the enemy from advancing; you could not break his might; you could not defend the people of your area and you could not discharge functions on behalf of your Imam. [43](#)*

## [Al-Ash'ath Ibn Qays](#)

Al-Ash'ath was the deputy governor of Azerbaijan during the reign of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. However, he

kept this office when Imam Ali ('a) became the caliph. The Imam ('a) sent him the following epistle:

*Now, had it not been for the defects that you enjoy, you would have been preceded to other people in this affair. However, your defects may be forgiven if you commit to piety and fear of Allah. You have known the details of the people's pledges of allegiance to me.*

*Although Talhah and Al-Zubayr were within those who had paid homage to me, they broke their pledge of allegiance to me for no reason and instigated the Mother of the Believers to march, along with them, to Al-Basrah where we met. There, I advised them to return home and retreat from the rebellion they had declared against me, but they refused. I thus did my best in calling them and acted excellently towards the remnants of them.*

*Certainly, your assignment is not a morsel for you, but it is a trust round your neck, and you have been charged with the protection of the people on behalf of your superiors. It is not for you to be oppressive towards the ruled, nor to risk yourself save on strong grounds.*

*You have in your hands the funds, which are the property of Allah to Whom belong all might and majesty, and you hold its charge until you pass it on to me. Probably, I will not be one of the bad rulers for you, and that is an end to the matter.*[44](#)

After the Battle of the Camel, Imam Ali ('a) wrote this letter to Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays Al-Kindi to send the revenue and levies of his province. Since Al-Ash'ath had fears about the future of his position and assignment, he intended to swallow all this money like other deputy governors and officers of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan did.

Therefore, when this letter reached him, he sent for his chief associates and after mentioning this letter to them said, 'I fear that this money will be taken away from me; I therefore intend to join Mu'awiyah.' However, those people said that it was a matter of shame to leave kith and kin and seek refuge with Mu'awiyah. Consequently, on the advice of these people, he postponed his idea to run away but did not agree to part with the money.

On receiving this information, Imam Ali ('a) sent Hujr ibn 'Adi Al-Kindi to bring him to Al-Kufah. He persuaded him and could bring him to Al-Kufah. On reaching there, his kit was found to contain four hundred thousand dirhams out of which Imam Ali ('a) left thirty thousand for him and deposited the rest in the public treasury.

However, Imam Ali ('a) sent another epistle to Al-Ash'ath in which he deposed him of this position. The epistle reads as follows:

*Now, it is only the respite of Allah that is granted to you has deceived you and given you the audacity to misbehave with the other people. You have always eaten from the sustenance given to you by Allah, disbelieved in His Signs, enjoyed your lot awhile, and wasted your good deeds up to this moment of your lifetime. Once you receive this letter of mine, you must come to me carrying with you all the funds of*

Muslims that you have under your hand, by the will of Allah. [45](#)

## 'Uthman Ibn Hunayf

The people of Al-Basrah, at that time, were known for their absolute loyalty to 'Uthman ibn 'Affan; therefore, the rebels against Imam Ali's government marched to this city and occupied it to be the center of their rebellion.

Imam Ali ('a) appointed a number of people as the deputy governors of Al-Basrah, the first of whom was 'Uthman ibn Hunayf, one of the most prominent companions of the Holy Prophet (S). He is described by historicists to have enjoyed distinctive sagacity and full awareness of all affairs. [46](#)

In Al-Basrah, a group of people invited 'Uthman ibn Hunayf to a banquet, and he responded.

When Imam Ali ('a) came to know about this, he sent him the following marvelous letter:

*O son of Hunayf, I have come to know that a young man of Al-Basrah invited you to a feast and you leapt towards it. Foods of different colors were being chosen for you and big bowls were being given to you. I never thought that you would accept the feast of a people who turn out the beggars and invite the rich. Look at the morsels you take, leave out that about which you are in doubt, and take that about which you are sure that it has been secured lawfully.*

*Remember that every follower has a leader whom he follows and from the effulgence of whose knowledge he takes light. Realize that your Imam has contented himself with two shabby pieces of cloth out of the comforts of the world and two loaves for his meal. Certainly, you cannot do so but at least support me in piety, exertion, chastity, and uprightness, because, by Allah, I have not treasured any gold out of your world nor amassed plentiful wealth nor collected any clothes other than the two shabby sheets.*

*Of course, all that we had in our possession under this sky was Fadak, but a group of people felt greedy for it and the other party withheld themselves from it. Allah is, after all, the best arbiter. What shall I do: Fadak, or no Fadak, while tomorrow this body is to go into the grave in whose darkness its traces will be destroyed and even news of it will disappear.*

*It is a pit that, even if its width is widened or the hands of the digger makes it broad and open, the stones and clods of clay will narrow it and the falling earth will close its aperture. I try to keep myself engaged in piety so that on the day of great fear it will be peaceful and steady in slippery places.*

*If I had wished, I could have taken the way leading towards worldly pleasures like pure honey, fine wheat, and silky clothes; but it cannot be that my passions lead me and greed takes me to choosing good meals while in Al-Hijaz or Yamamah, there may be people who have no hope of getting bread or who do not have a full meal. Shall I lie with a satiated belly while around me there may be hungry bellies*

*and thirsty livers? Or shall I be as the poet has said:*

*'It is enough for you to have a disease that you lie with your belly full while around you people may be badly yearning for dried leather.'*

*Shall I be content with being called the Leader of the Believers, although I do not share with the people the hardships of the world? Or shall I be an example for them in the distresses of life? I have not been created to keep myself busy in eating good foods like the tied animal whose only worry is his fodder or like a loose animal whose activity is to swallow.*

*It fills its belly with its feed and forgets the purpose behind it. Shall I be left uncontrolled to pasture freely? Or shall I draw the rope of misguidance? Or shall I roam aimlessly in the paths of bewilderment?*

*I see as if one of you would say that if this is what the son of Abu Talib eats, then weakness must have made him unfit to fight his foes and encounter the brave. Remember that the tree of the forest is the best of timber, while green twigs have soft bark, and the wild bushes are very strong for burning and slow in dying off.*

*My relation with the Messenger of Allah is that of one branch with another, or of the wrist with the forearm. By Allah, if the Arabs join together to fight me, I will not run away from them; and if I get the opportunity, I will hasten to catch them by their necks. I shall surely strive to relieve the earth of this man of perverse mind and uncouth body until the bits of the earth are removed from the grain.*

*Get away from me, O world! Your rein is on your own shoulders as I have released myself from your ditches, removed myself of your snares, and avoided walking into your slippery places. Where are those whom you have deceived by your jokes? Where are those communities whom you have enticed with your embellishments? They are all confined to graves and hidden in burial places.*

*By Allah, if you had been a visible personality and a body capable of feeling, I would have awarded you the penalties fixed by Allah because of the people whom you received through desires and the communities whom you threw into destruction and the rulers whom you consigned to ruin and drove to places of distress after which there is neither going nor returning.*

*Indeed whoever stepped on your slippery place slipped, whoever rode your waves was drowned, and whoever evaded your snares received inward support. He who keeps himself safe from you does not worry even though his affairs may be straitened and the world to him is like a day that is near expiring.*

*Get away from me (O world), for, by Allah, I do not bow before you so that you may humiliate me, nor do I let loose the reins for you so that you may drive me away. I swear by Allah an oath wherein I, except the will of Allah, that I shall so train myself that it will feel joyful if it gets one loaf for eating, and be content with only salt to season it.*

*I shall let my eyes empty themselves of tears like the stream whose water has flown away. Should Ali*

*eat whatever he has and fall asleep like the cattle that fill their stomachs from the pasture land and lie down, or as the goats that graze, eat the green grass, and go into their pen! His eyes may die if he, after long years, follows loose cattle and pasturing animals.*

*Blessed is he who discharges his obligations towards Allah and endures his hardships, allows himself no sleep in the night but when sleep overpowers him, lies down on the ground using his hand as a pillow, along with those who keep their eyes wakeful in fear of the Day of Judgment, whose bodies are ever away from beds, whose lips are humming in remembrance of Allah, and whose sins have been erased through their prolonged implorations for forgiveness.*

*They are the party of Allah. Be it known, verily the party of Allah alone shall be the successful one. Therefore, O son of Hunayf, fear Allah and be content with your own loaves so that you may escape Hell.*[47](#)

When Imam Ali (‘a) was informed about the marching of Talhah, Al-Zubayr, and ‘Aishah to occupy Al-Basrah, he sent the following letter to ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf:

From the servant of Allah, Ali, the Leader of the Believers, To ‘Uthman ibn Hunayf:

*Now, the transgressors had made covenant with Allah but they broke their covenant and marched towards your country. Satan has driven them to demand with what Allah does not please. However, Allah is strongest in prowess and strongest to give an exemplary punishment.*

*When they come to you, then you must call them to obedience (to the leader) and to commit themselves to the fulfillment of the pledge and the covenant that they took upon themselves before they had departed from us. If they respond to you, then you must honor their vicinity to you as long as they will be with you; but if they refuse and insist on clinging to the rope of breaching the covenant and disagreement with us, then you must encounter them in fighting until Allah will judge between them and you, and He is the best of all judges.*

*I am writing this letter to you from Al-Rabadhah while I am accelerating my march towards you, by the will of Allah.*[48](#)

## **Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas**

Among the family of Al-‘Abbas ibn Abd Al-Muttalib the Holy Prophet’s uncle, Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas was the most brilliant personality in Islam. He studied under Imam Ali (‘a) and received many fields of knowledge from him, such as Muslim jurisprudence (fiqh) and Quranic exegesis (Tafsir).

Abdullah was also characterized by discernment, acumen, rationality, and profundity. In view of these features, Imam Ali (‘a) took him as his consultant and assistant and used to seek his advice in many of his political and social affairs. The Imam (‘a) also depended upon Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas in debates and

arguments against the rebels and other categories of people. For instance, when he debated with the Khawarij, they failed to discuss him.

Besides, Abdullah ibn 'Abbas enjoyed a lofty position with 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab who respected him highly, although Abdullah used to overwhelm 'Umar in argument:

One day, Abdullah ibn 'Abbas was accompanying 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab in one of the streets of Al-Madinah when the latter put his hand in Abdullah's hand and said, 'I believe that your acquaintance (i.e. Ali ibn Abi Talib) has been wronged.'

Abdullah answered, 'So, give him back his due.'

Stung by these words, 'Umar pulled his hand back from Abdullah's and stopped walking while he was murmuring for a while. He then said to Abdullah, 'In my conception, the people did not accept your acquaintance as their leader because of no other reason than that they deemed him too young to hold this position.'

Abdullah answered, 'Allah did not deem him too young when he ordered him to take Surah Bara'ah from Abu-Bakr!' [49](#)

These words silenced 'Umar who could not find any answer to Abdullah's overwhelming argument.

On another occasion, 'Umar met Abdullah ibn 'Abbas and said, 'Do you know the reason for which your people deterred you from holding the position of leadership after Muhammad?'

Abdullah answered, 'If I do not know, then you must know.'

'Umar said, 'They hated that both Prophethood and caliphate should be given to you and then you would boast so excessively over your people. For this reason, the people of Quraysh chose a leader for themselves and they indeed were excellently successful.'

Abdullah said, 'If you allow me to speak provided that you will hold off your anger from me, I will speak.'

'Umar said, 'You may speak.'

Abdullah said, 'You say that the people of Quraysh chose a leader for themselves and they were excellently successful in their choice. However, if they had chosen for themselves what Allah chose for them, they would have had all success and excellence in their hands and none would have objected or envied them.'

You also said that the people of Quraysh hated that we—the Banu-Hashim—would hold both Prophethood and caliphate. However, Almighty Allah, describing a certain people to have hated something, says,

***‘That is because they hated what Allah revealed; so, He rendered their deeds null. (47/19)’***

These words annoyed ‘Umar so markedly that he replied with rude words, saying, ‘Too far it is, O son of ‘Abbas! I have been informed against you, but I detested settling an account with you on such information so that your standing in my view would not be shaken.’

Abdullah asked, ‘What is the information against me? If it is true, then it must not cause you to change your opinion about me; but if it is false, then I am capable of fending off falsity from myself.’

‘Umar said, ‘I have been informed that you state that the people of Quraysh deterred you from caliphate out of their envy, transgression, and wronging against you.’

Abdullah answered, ‘As for wronging us, this has been so obvious for the ignorant and the learnt. As for envy, Adam was envied and we are his envied descendants.’

Infuriated by these words, ‘Umar said, ‘Too far it is! Too far it is! Your hearts, O descendants of Hashim, are stubbornly full of envy that can never be removed.’

Abdullah answered, ‘Slow down! Do not ascribe envy and cheating to the hearts of people from whom Allah has removed filth and whom He has purified thoroughly. Remember that the heart of Allah’s Messenger is one of these hearts!’

These words hurt ‘Umar’s feelings more and more; he therefore shouted at Abdullah, ‘Beat it!’

When Abdullah responded and left, ‘Umar felt shy and said, ‘O son of ‘Abbas, stop. By Allah, I will always observe your right and love whatever pleases you.’

However, Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas left after he had said, ‘I have a right that is incumbent upon you as well as every Muslim. Hence, he who regards my right will have done the true thing to do; but he who disregards my right will have missed his own fortuity.’[50](#)

### **Deputy Governorship Of Al-Basrah**

After the Battle of the Camel and the unstoppable misfortunes that followed, Imam Ali (‘a) commissioned Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas to hold the office of the deputy governorship of this city so that he, due to his capability of running affairs duly, would put an end to disorder, refute the rumors of the enemies, and guide people to the right path.

Imam Ali (‘a) wrote a number of epistles to Abdullah, one of which was the following brief one:

*Now, do not cause your share (of this office) to be an amount of money that you gain or reTalibation that heals your rage; rather, your share must be such acts that muffle the wrong and revive the right.*[51](#)

On another occasion, Imam Ali (‘a) wrote the following epistle to Abdullah,

*Now, you cannot go farther than the limit of your life, nor can you be given a livelihood that is not for you. Remember that this life consists of two days: a day for you and a day against you, and that the world is a house changing authorities. Whatever in it is for you will come to you despite your weakness, and whatever in it turns against you cannot be brought back despite your strength.*[52](#)

Inviting Abdullah to take part in his war against Mu'awiyah, Imam Ali ('a) sent him the following letter:

*Now, send to me all the Muslims and believers from your side, remind them of my favors to them, my amnesty, and my role in their survival, awaken their desires for jihad, and mention to them the merits that they will gain from participation in jihad.*[53](#)

## **False Accusations**

Some historicists have accused Abdullah ibn 'Abbas of embezzling the public treasury of Al-Basrah, providing as evidence a number of letters that are reported to have been sent by Imam Ali ('a) to him. However, it is not improbable that these letters were fabricated by the enemies so as to deform the good reputation of Abdullah ibn 'Abbas.

Moreover, other reference books of history of Islam have invented many stories about the treachery of Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, the best of which was that he gave back what he had taken from the public treasury![54](#)

In fact, the conduct and history of Abdullah prove the falsity of such accusations; he assumed the mission of resisting the enemies of the Imam ('a) and refuted any argument that was arisen against him. He was the first to pray for the Imam ('a) from the minbar. He felt so sorry for the passing away of the Imam ('a) and wept for him so heavily that he lost his sight.

Finally, Imam Ali ('a) used to praise and say the most laudatory words about Abdullah. Once, Imam Ali ('a) said,

*How excellent Abdullah ibn 'Abbas is! Verily, he can see the unseen through a transparent curtain.*[55](#)

Al-Baghdadi, a famous historicist and man of letters, states that Imam Ali ('a) employed Abu'l-Aswad Al-Du'ali as the deputy governor of Al-Basrah after Abdullah ibn 'Abbas.[56](#)

## **Ziyad Ibn 'Ubayd**

Ziyad ibn 'Ubayd Al-Rumi was appointed as the deputy governor of Al-Basrah by Abdullah ibn 'Abbas.[57](#)

After the martyrdom of Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr, Mu'awiyah ordered Abdullah Al-Hadrami to go to Al-Basrah and rally its people against Imam Ali ('a), because the majority of the people of Al-Basrah believed that 'Uthman was killed wrongfully. Many of them therefore responded to the vicious call of Al

Hadrami and declared rebellion.

Having feared for himself from these rebels, Ziyad wrote a letter to Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, informing him of the situation, and Abdullah, in his turn, sent a letter to Imam Ali ('a) who, consequently, asked the people of Al-Kufah to stand against the rebellion, but they were too reluctant to respond to him.

A'yan ibn Dabi'ah Al-Mujashi'i took upon himself the mission of warding off that rebellion; therefore, Imam Ali ('a) ordered him to go to Al-Basrah and gave him the following letter to be handed over to Ziyad:

*Now, I have sent A'yan ibn Dabi'ah to make his people separate from Al-Hadrami. So, you may keep an eye on that: if you see that A'yan will do the mission perfectly and be able to separate these rabbles, then this is what we would love to take place. If these people insist on defiance and disobedience, then you may order those who obey you to fight against those who disobey.*

*If you are the victorious, then this is what we expect from you; otherwise, you may stall and delay them, because very soon will the batTalibons of Muslims come to you. Through them, Allah will kill the mischief-makers and the wrongdoers, and will grant victory to the rightful believers.*[58](#)

In Al-Basrah, A'yan delivered the letter to Ziyad who read it and commented, 'Indeed, I hope I will be released from this responsibility.'

A'yan then met with the people of his tribe and warned them against rebellion. When they responded to him, he led them to encounter Al-Hadrami. They thus engaged in many disputes against the followers of Al-Hadrami. Although Ziyad too wanted to fight against the rebels, he finally changed his mind.

He then sent a letter to Imam Ali ('a) informing him of the ambush that was laid against A'yan by the rebels and suggesting that the Imam ('a) would send Jariyah ibn Qudamah to deal with the matter.

Responding to Ziyad's suggestion, Imam Ali ('a) ordered Jariyah to go to Al-Basrah and gave him the following letter to read it before the people:

From the servant of Allah, Ali, the Leader of the Believers,

To every Muslim and believer who inhabits Al-Basrah and before whom this letter is read:

*Peace be with you all. Now, Allah is too Forbearing and Forgiving to hasten His punishment before the completion of evidence (against the wrongdoer). He never overtakes a sinful for the first sign of sinning. Rather, He accepts repentance, extends His forbearance, and consents to turning to Him, because this will confirm the argument and open all doors for excuses.*

*Because of the mutiny of the majority of you, O people, you deserved to be punished. However, I have pardoned the criminals, held back my sword from striking the absconders, admitted the remorse of those*

*who came to me regretful, and accepted your pledge of allegiance to me. If you now fulfill your pledge to me, accept my advices, and keep to obedience to me, I will then act upon the Book of Allah, the traditions of the Prophet, and the truth in dealing with you and I will thus lead you to the path of true guidance.*

*By Allah, I do not know any other ruler, save the Messenger of Allah (S), who can be more knowledgeable and more practical than I am in acting upon these matters. I say this truthfully while I do not intend to dispraise the past rulers or to find fault with their conducts. However, if the perishing whims and the unjust and foolish opinions of you make you pace towards disagreeing with and defying me, then my horses are drawn near to you and my saddles are made ready for fighting you.*

*By Allah, if you force me to march militarily towards you, I will then impose upon you such catastrophic strikes that the strikes that you have received in the Battle of the Camel will be only one sup of it. However, I expect that you, by the will of Allah, will not make me do such things to yourselves.*

*I have written this letter to you in advance so that it will be an argument against you and after it, I will not write any other letter if you deem cheating my advice to you and contend with my courier. However, if you do, I myself will come to fight you, by the will of Allah the All-exalted.[59](#)*

### **Another Letter To Ziyad**

Imam Ali (‘a) was informed that Ziyad acted haughtily towards people and ate different kinds of food in one meal; he therefore sent him the following advice-giving epistle:

*Sa’d has mentioned that you reviled at him wrongfully, threatened him, and rejected him haughtily and arrogantly. What has made you behave snootily? The Messenger of Allah (S) said, ‘Pride is the dress of Allah. He who contends with Allah to strip Him of His dress will be shattered by Him.’*

*Sa’d has also told me that you eat various colors of food on one day and you use oil everyday. What will harm you if you observe fasting for the sake of Allah several days, give some of what you possess as alms seeking the reward of Allah, and eat simple meals? Verily, this is the slogan of the righteous people.*

*While you are wallowing in blissful life and using the graces for yourself rather than for the neighbors, the poor, the feeble, the destitute, the widows, and the orphans, do you expect that you will be awarded the wages of the almsgivers?*

*Sa’d has also told me that you use the language of the pious people while you do the actions of the sinful! If you have really done so, then you have first of all wronged yourself and caused your deeds to be frustrated. Now, you must repent to your Lord so that He will set aright your deeds.*

*You must also incline to economy and moderation in your affairs and offer the surplus of the graces that*

*you are enjoying to your Lord to be recompensed on the day of your need. You may use oil once every two days at least, but do not use it on a daily basis, because I have heard the Messenger of Allah (S) saying, 'Use oil from time to time, but do not use it everyday.'* [60](#)

### **Warning Ziyad Against Mu'awiyah**

Mu'awiyah was infuriated by Ziyad who had done his jobs perfectly; therefore, he sent him a menacing letter. Once he received Mu'awiyah's letter, Ziyad delivered a speech in which he belittled Mu'awiyah and threatened that he would face him with all forces he had.

Ziyad then sent a letter to Imam Ali ('a), informing him of the situation. Replying him, Imam Ali ('a) wrote the following letter:

*I entrusted with you this office because I had already known for sure that you deserve it and you can do your jobs perfectly. In the reign of 'Umar, Abu-Sufyan invented a slip out of his arrogance and his lying to himself. So, his claim was too false to be regarded. Mu'awiyah is indeed like Satan the accursed; he attacks people from the front, the rear, the right, and the left sides. So, beware of him! Beware of him! Beware of him!* [61](#)

### **Hudhayfah Al-Yamani**

Hudhayfah Al-Yamani was one of the most prominent companions of the Holy Prophet (S). He had the capability of distinguishing the hypocrites; he therefore was known as the keeper of the secrets. Due to his strong ties with Imam Ali ('a), he used to spread his virtues and merits.

When Imam Ali ('a) appointed him as the deputy governor of Al-Mada'in, he sent to him the following epistle:

*In the Name of Allah the All-beneficent, the All-merciful (I begin). From the servant of Allah, Ali, the Leader of the Believers,*

*To Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman:*

*Now, I am entrusting with you the same office that you had held in the time of the one who was before me; namely, the administration of the affairs of Al-Mada'in. I now commission you to run the works of the tributes, the villages, and the affairs of the Dhimmis.*

*You may now gather around you those whom you trust and those whom you love from among the people whose faith and honesty are consented by you so that you will employ them as your assistants in the carrying out of your jobs, because this will bring more power to your ruler and you and will impose more suppression on your enemy.*

*I then order you to fear Allah and obey Him in secret and open affairs. I also beware you of His*

*chastisement for things that you do covertly or overtly. I advance to you that you should act charitably to the good-doers and harshly to the stubborn.*

*I also order you to lean on lenience in all of your affairs and on fair judgment and justice in your dealing with your subjects, for you will certainly be answerable for that. Give the oppressed their dues fairly, pardon people, and behave nicely as much as you can, because Allah will reward the good-doers.*

*I order you to collect the land taxes on the strength of truth and fairness. Do not exceed what I have ordered you to do, do not leave any of your missions imperfectly done, and do not invent any matter on your own.*

*Then, you must distribute the funds of the taxes equitably and fairly among the beneficiaries, make yourself gentle to your subjects, treat them equally when they are in your presence, apply the truth to the close and the faraway equally, judge between people with the truth, and distribute their dues among them equally.*

*You must neither follow your personal whims nor fear the censure of any censurer in matters related to Allah, because Allah is verily with those who fear Him and those who are good-doers.*

*I have sent this letter to you so that you will recite it before the people of your governorate and they will realize our view about them and about all Muslims. You must then gather them and read the letter before them. Make the young and the old among them to pledge allegiance to us, by the will of Allah. [62](#)*

Imam Ali (‘a) sent another letter to the people of Al-Mada’in and ordered Hudhayfah to read it before them all. The letter reads as follows:

*In the Name of Allah the All-beneficent, the All-merciful (I begin).*

*From the servant of Allah, Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Leader of the Believers,*

*To every Muslim who is informed of this letter of mine:*

*Peace be upon you all! In your presence, I praise Allah save Whom there is no god and invoke His blessings upon Muhammad and his Household. Allah the All-exalted has chosen Islam to be the religion of Him, His angels, and His messengers as indication of His well-compacted making, excellent management, and regard for His servants.*

*He has given Islam exclusively to those whom He loves from amongst His created beings. He thus sent to them Muhammad who taught them the Book and wisdom as a sign of honor and mark of favor to this community.*

*He then educated them so that they would find the true guidance, united them so that they would not separate from one another, and informed them (of His rewards for the obedience and His punishment for*

*the disobedient) so that they would not act partially. When the Messenger accomplished what was obligatory upon him to accomplish, he left towards the mercy of Allah, praiseworthy and praised.*

*After him, some Muslims appointed two men after they had consented to their methods of guidance and conduct. The two men lived as long as Allah willed and then He, the Almighty and All-majestic, received them through death. After them, they appointed the third man who created some events and the community found fault with him due to some of his acts. They therefore agreed on deposing him. They then bore a grudge against him and changed him.*

*Like horses following each other hurriedly, they then came to me and swore allegiance. I only beseech Allah to make me follow His true guidance and seek His help to make me steadfast on piety.*

*Behold! What is obligatory upon us towards you is that we should act upon the Book of Allah and the traditions of His Prophet (S), should rule over you according to our duties towards Him and the duty of making his traditions effective and active amongst you, and should act sincerely towards you whether you are present or absent. From Allah alone we seek help in this respect. Allah is surely sufficient to us and He is the best disposer of affairs.*

*I have entrusted Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman with the management of your affairs, for he is one of those who follow the true guidance in an accepted manner and whose righteousness is expected by me. I have ordered him to behave well with the upright ones among you, to be harsh towards the suspicious ones, and to be lenient to your community.*

*Finally, I beseech Allah to grant you and me the best choices, true following of Islam, and a vast amount of His mercy in this world and the other world.*

*Peace and Allah's mercy and blessings be upon you. [63](#)*

## **Sa'd Ibn Mas'ud**

After the passing away of Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman, Imam Ali ('a) appointed Sa'd ibn Mas'ud, one of his virtuous companions, as the deputy governor of Al-Mada'in and wrote the following epistle to him:

*Now, as you have defrayed the taxes imposed upon you, obeyed your Lord, and won the consent of your leader, you acted just like the upright, pious, and honest people. May Allah forgive your sins, accept your efforts, and grant you an excellent final abode! [64](#)*

When the Imam ('a) decided to fight against Mu'awiyah, he sent the following letter to Sa'd ibn Mas'ud:

*I have sent to you Ziyad ibn Harb so that you will send to me the warriors from among the people of Al-Kufah as soon as you can, by the will of Allah. There is no power save with Allah. [65](#)*

This letter reveals that Sa'd was one of the reliable heroes of Islam; therefore, Imam Ali ('a) sought his help in fighting against Mu'awiyah, the insolent foe of the Imam.

## [‘Ajlan Ibn Qudamah](#)

Imam Ali (‘a) appointed ‘Ajlan ibn Qudamah as his deputy governor of Kaskar, a city between Al-Kufah and Al-Basrah. The Imam (‘a) sent the following epistle to ‘Ajlan:

*Now, you may send the funds of Allah, because they are the dues of Muslims and you are not allowed to take a share of them more than the share of any other Muslim. O son of Qudamah, never think that you are allowed to dispose of the funds of Kaskar as same as you act freely with a fund that you have inherited from your father or mother. Now, hurry up in bringing these funds and come to us as soon as you can, by the will of Allah. [66](#)*

## [Sulayman Ibn Surad](#)

Imam Ali (‘a) appointed Sulayman ibn Surad Al-Khuza’i, one of his brilliant devotees, to the office of the deputy governorship of Al-Jabal and wrote to him the following epistle:

*You have made a reference to the dues of Muslims that are now under your disposition. The people of your and our countries are equally rightful to have a share in these funds; therefore, you may inform me about the amounts, give the beneficiaries their dues, and send the rest to us so that we will distribute it among the people of our country, by the will of Allah. [67](#)*

## [Land Taxes](#)

### [Significance Of Land Taxes](#)

In his famous epistle to Malik Al-Ashtar, Imam Ali (‘a) referred to the significance of the land taxes, saying,

*Look after the revenue affairs in such a way that those engaged in it remain prosperous because in their prosperity lies the prosperity of all others. The others cannot prosper without them, because all people are dependent on revenue and its payers. [68](#)*

### [Instructions To The Tax Collectors](#)

Establishing the moral and administrative basics of tax collecting, Imam Ali (‘a) sent the following epistle to his functionaries:

*From the servant of Allah Ali the Leader of the Believers to the tax collectors:*

*So now, he who does not fear where he is going does not send forward for himself that which could protect him, while he who follows his personal whims and seeks after them, although they will drive him into a disadvantageous end result will very soon be one of the remorseful.*

*Behold! The happiest of all people in this world is he who turns away from matters whose damages are recognized, but the most wretched of them all is he who follows his own lusts. Now, you should learn lessons and know that you will win the reward of the good deeds that you do.*

*As for anything else, you will wish that between it and you there were a long duration of time; and Allah makes you to be cautious of retribution from Himself; and Allah is Compassionate to the servants.*

*You will unavoidably undergo the bad results of whatever you have neglected.*

*You should know that the obligations laid on you are few, while their reward is much. Even if there had been no fear of punishment for revolt and disobedience, which Allah has prohibited, the reward in keeping aloof from it would be enough incentive to abstain from going after it. Show mercy to people so that you will be shown mercy.*

*Do not overburden people. Behave yourselves justly with them and act with endurance with regard to their needs, because you are the treasurers of the people, representatives of the community, and ambassadors of the leaders.*

*Do not use doormen (who prevent people from meeting you) and do not deter anyone from presenting his request so that they may refrain from presenting them to you. Do not punish some people for crimes committed by others except in cases of sponsorship. Tame yourselves to patience so that you will win prosperity-driving results. Beware of postponing your jobs and repelling the good deeds; lest, you will be sorry.*

*Do not deprive anyone of his needs and do not prevent him from securing his requirements. [69](#)*

*For the collection of land taxes from the people, do not sell their winter or summer clothes, nor cattle with which they work, nor slaves. Do not whip anyone for the sake of one dirham. Do not touch the property of any person whether he be one who prays (i.e. a Muslim) or a protected unbeliever, unless you find a horse or weapons used for attacks against Muslims, because it is not proper for Muslims to leave these things in the hands of the enemies of Islam to enable them to have power over Islam.*

*Do not deny good counsel to yourself, good behavior to the army, succor to the subjects, and strength to the religion of Allah. Strive in the way of Allah as is obligatory on you, because Allah the Glorified desires us and you to be thankful to Him as best as we can and that we should help Him to the best of our power. There is no power save with Allah the All-high the All-glorious. [70](#)*

## **Reproaching And Deposing Deputy Governors**

Reproaching one of his officers after the people had complained about him, Imam Ali ('a) sent him the following epistle:

*Now, the cultivators [71](#) of your city have complained of your strictness, hardheartedness, humiliating*

*treatment, and harshness. I thought over it and found that since they are unbelievers, they cannot be brought near nor kept away or treated severely because of the pledge with them. Behave with them in-between strictness and softness and adopt for them a mingling or remoteness and aloofness with nearness and closeness if Allah so wills.* [72](#)

Some of the agents that Imam Ali (‘a) had employed to watch over his deputy governors, informed him that Al-Nu‘man ibn ‘Ajlān, the deputy governor of Bahrain, had misused the public funds. As a result, Imam Ali (‘a) sent him the following epistle:

*He who belittles the trust, desires for treachery, and does not behave honestly with regard to himself and his faith has in fact behaved badly against himself in this world, while what he will encounter as a consequence of misbehavior in this world will be in the other world bitterer, more enduring, more miserable, and most sustained.*

*So, fear Allah, for you belong to a clan that is known for uprightness of its members. Act according to the good opinion that is had about you, reconsider your affairs if what has been informed to be against you is true, do not make me change my view about you, clean up the land taxes you have levied, and then write to me the conclusions of all that, so that I will tell you what to do, by the will of Allah.* [73](#)

[1.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 7:36-7.

[2.](#) Baqir Sharif Al-Qarashi, Nisam Al-Hukm wa'l-Idarah fi'l-Islam (System of Rule and Administration in Islam), pp. 360.

[3.](#) Ibn Qutaybah, 'Uyun Al-Akhbar 1:1.

[4.](#) Baqir Sharif Al-Qarashi, Nisam Al-Hukm wa'l-Idarah fi'l-Islam (System of Rule and Administration in Islam), pp. 361-2.

[5.](#) Al-Zamakhshari, Rabi' Al-Abrar 4:224.

[6.](#) Al-Zamakhshari, Rabi' Al-Abrar 4:227.

[7.](#) Al-Bayhaqi, Al-Sunan Al-Kubra 4:115.

[8.](#) Sahih Al-Bukhari 2:789.

[9.](#) Al-Qalqashandi, Subh Al-A'sha 2:325.

[10.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 25.

[11.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 40.

[12.](#) Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 1:211.

Imam Ali (‘a) then decide to remove him from his office and sent him the following epistle:

‘In the Name of Allah; the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. ‘Clear proof indeed has come to you from your Lord; therefore, give full measure and weight and do not diminish to men their things, and do not make mischief in the land. What remains with Allah is better for you if you are believers, and I am not a keeper over you.’ Once you receive this letter of mine, suspend all of your deeds that we have entrusted with you so that one, who will take your place, will come to you.’

[13.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 71.

[14.](#) Baqir Sharif Al-Qarashi, Nisam Al-Hukm wa'l-Idarah fi'l-Islam (System of Rule and Administration in Islam), pp. 441.

[15.](#) Ibn Abd Al-Barr, Al-Isabah 3/239.

[16.](#) Ibn Abd Al-Barr, Al-Isabah 3/239.

[17.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3:137.

[18.](#) Ibn Taghri, Al-Nujum Al-Zahirah 1:100.

[19.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 38.

[20.](#) This is a reference to the saying of the Holy Prophet (S) about the children of Umayyah and the children of Abu'l-'As ibn Umayyah the grandfather of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan and the dynasty of Marwan who became caliphs. The Holy Prophet's predictive saying was related by Abu-Dharr Al-Ghifari. It reads as follows:

When the number of the children of Umayyah reaches forty men, they will make Allah's people their slaves, grab Allah's funds as their own property, and make the Book of Allah a cause of corruption.

(See Al-Hakim Al-Nayshaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'Ala Al-Sahihayn 4:479; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 11: 149.)

About the children of Abu'l-'As, it is related by Abu-Dharr Al-Ghifari, Abu-Sa'id Al-Khidri, Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, Abu-Hurayrah, and many other reporters of Prophetic traditions that the Holy Prophet (S) said, When the number of the children of Abu'l-'As reaches thirty men, they will grab the funds of Allah as their own property, make Allah's people their slaves, and make the religion of Allah a cause of corruption.

(See Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 3:80; Al-Hakim Al-Nayshaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'Ala Al-Sahihayn 4:480; Ibn Hajar, Al-MaTalibb Al-Aliyah 4:332; Al-Haythami, Majma' Al-Zawa'id 5:241,243; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 11: 148,149,351,354.)

The history of Islam, after the passing away of the Holy Prophet (S), has enough points of evidence to prove the accuracy of this Prophetic prediction; therefore, the fear of Imam Ali ('a) for the Muslim community was based on this reason.

[21.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 62.

[22.](#) Tarikh At-Tabari 6:255; Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3: 153.

[23.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:29.

[24.](#) Muhsin Al-Amin Al-'Amili, Al-Ghadir 9:40.

[25.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 27.

[26.](#) Tarikh Al-Tabari 5:231; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:25.

[27.](#) Al-Mas'udi, Muruj Al-Dhahab 3:60; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:284; Ibn Sa'd, Al-Tabaqat Al-Kubra 3: 15; Ibn Muzahim Al-Minqari, Waq'at Siffin, pp. 119.

[28.](#) Ibn Taghri, Al-Nujum Al-Zahirah 1: 110.

[29.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 68.

[30.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 35.

[31.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 33.

[32.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 67.

[33.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 70.

[34.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3: 103.

[35.](#) Tarikh Ibn Wadiah 2: 190.

[36.](#) Tarikh Al-Ya'qubi 2:201.

[37.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 26.

[38.](#) Nasr ibn Muzahim, Kitab Siffin, pp. 104.

[39.](#) Muhammad Baqir Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 5: 156.

[40.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3:420.

[41.](#) Tarikh Al-Tabari 6:65-77.

About the story of Masqalah's flight to Mu'awiyah, historicists state that when Al-Khirrit ibn Rashid Al-Naji, one of the chiefs of the Khawarij, started making mischief in the land after he had criticized Imam Ali ('a) for the event of the arbitration; thus rallying people against the Imam ('a), and his people from the tribe of Banu-Najiyah, who were Christians, joined him and broke the conditions of protection under the Muslim State, he started spreading horror and mischief among people.

Imam Ali ('a) therefore mobilized a batTalibon of his army to fight against Al-Khirrit and his followers. Under the commandship of Ma'qil, the Imam's troops could catch Al-Khirrit in a region in Persia, killing him and a good number of his followers, and taking the others as captives. Among these captives, there were women and children the voices of whose cries affected Masqalah emotionally; he therefore decided to free them for an amount of money that he committed to pay. However, he paid part of the amount and could not pay the other part. Accordingly, he had to flee to Mu'awiyah in the darkness of one night.

About the flight of Masqalah, Imam Ali ('a) said, 'Shame on Masqalah! He acted like masters and fled like slaves! He thus did not give any opportunity to anyone to praise him. Had he kept himself there, we would have been lenient to him with

regard to the payment of his debts and we would have granted him respite until he would be able to pay off.’

However, Masqalah regretted his situation very much and expressed his sorrow in some poetic verses. (Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:264-71.)

[42.](#) Yaqut Al-Hamawi, Mu’jam Al-Buldan 5:483.

[43.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 61.

[44.](#) Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Imamah wa’l-Siyasah 1:91; Nasr ibn Muzahim, Kitab Siffin, pp. 20.

[45.](#) Tarikh Al-Ya’qubi 2:176.

[46.](#) Ibn Abd Al-Barr, Al-Istiab 3:90.

[47.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 45.

[48.](#) Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 9:312.

[49.](#) Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:18.

[50.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi’l-Tarikh 3:63-4; Tarikh Al-Tabari 5:31; Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 3:107.

[51.](#) Ibn Shahr’ashub, Manaqib Ali Abi Talib 1:327.

[52.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 72.

[53.](#) ‘Allamah Al-Majlisi, Bihar Al-Anwar 8:471.

[54.](#) Al-Mawardi, Adab Al-Din wa’l-Dunya, pp. 64.

[55.](#) Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-’Iqd Al-Farid 2:363.

[56.](#) Al-Baghdadi, Khuzanat Al-Adab 1:281.

[57.](#) Many scholars have wondered why Imam Ali (‘a) had accepted Ziyad in this office and had not deposed him although Ziyad had no legitimate father so that he was known as Ziyad ibn Abih (i.e. the son of his father) and that Mu’awiyah, depending upon the testimony of one of the most notorious panders in the pre-Islamic era, claimed Ziyad to have been his illegitimate brother! In fact, according to the principles of the Islamic law, Ziyad must have been the son of ‘Ubayd Al-Rumi because Ziyad’s mother Sumayyah, even though proved to have committed adultery with Abu-Sufyan and others, was the wife of ‘Ubayd; therefore, a child is attached to his father according to the Prophetic tradition: ‘The child is for the owner of the bed (on which his mother was impregnated), while the share of the adulteress is nothing but stoning.’

[58.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa’adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 5:160.

[59.](#) Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:50; Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi’l-Tarikh 3:182.

[60.](#) Ibn Abi’l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 16:196.

[61.](#) Abd Al-Qadir Badran, Tahdhib Tarikh Ibn ‘Asakir 5:410.

[62.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa’adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:19.

[63.](#) Sayyid Ali Khan, Al-Darajat Al-Rafi’ah, pp. 288.

[64.](#) Tarikh Al-Ya’qubi 2:176.

[65.](#) Tarikh Al-Tabari 4:59.

[66.](#) Al-Buladhari, Ansab Al-Ashraf, pp. 338.

[67.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa’adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 5:351.

[68.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 53.

[69.](#) Nasr ibn Muzahim, Kitab Siffin, pp. 108.

[70.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 52.

[71.](#) These people were Magians. That is why the treatment of Imam Ali’s officer with them was not the same as with Muslims. Disgusted with this, they wrote a letter of complaint to the Imam (‘a) and spoke of the officer’s harshness. In reply, the Imam (‘a) wrote to his officer that he should meet out treatment to them in which there should be neither harshness nor such leniency which they may exploit to create mischief, because if they are let loose, they will be involved in machinations against the government and disturb the country’s administration by creating one mischief or the other, while a wholly repressive policy cannot be justified, because they are counted among the subjects and their rights as such cannot be ignored.

[72.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 19.

[73.](#) Tarikh Al-Ya’qubi 2:177.

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